CITADEL

JOSEPH HUSBAND

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Dear Dun —

You sat with me tonight and looked at Cellini and "things" and I hope that when you read this you'll think of

Joseph Hubert

Wainwright
Sept 3. 1935

Citadel

CITADEL

A Novel

By

Joseph Husband

Author of "High Hurdles," "A Year in a Coal-Mine," "A Year in the Navy," etc.

Hodder and Stoughton
Limited *London*

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MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
BILLING AND SONS, LTD., GUILDFORD AND ESHER.

TO

DOCTOR RALPH C. HAMILL

In happy memory of one clear morning when we stood side by side on a high parapet of the Citadel and watched the dawn flood over the plain of Le Cap three thousand feet below.

Citadel

FROM the high bulwark in the waist of the brig, John Bush watched the boat of Monsieur Samatan pull steadily toward the shore. Day had ended in a flare of golden flame behind the towering black silhouette of Le Morne du Cap, and with tropic suddenness the night had fallen, a clear transparent night bright with starshine. Under the dark foot of the mountain a few lights in Le Cap Française shone yellow and distant. The sea was black and smooth, and the air so still that faint sounds in the town were now and then audible, although the brig swung at her cable a mile off shore. In the unbroken silence of the night Bush heard the creak and clump of the boat's oars grow faint and distant; with his forearms on the bulwark and his square chin resting on his hands he watched it disappear in the shadows of the shore. Forward in the galley the cook began to sing a droning negro melody.

But quite at variance with the peace of the pleasant evening were the thoughts that were troubling the brain of John Bush at the close of this seventh day of December in the year 1814. To be sure he was at anchor and beneath his feet was the cargo which almost four weeks before he

had taken on board at the ice-encrusted wharf beside his uncle's Philadelphia warehouse for delivery at Le Cap in French Haytian San Domingo. Like soft yellow stars beneath the mountain were the lights of his destination. Tomorrow, if all went well, he would lie in close to the town and from opened hatches discharge his cargo: five hundred barrels of flour, an equal number of barrels of dry herrings in coarse salt, lard, barrel staves, and hams. And, if all went well, he would load with hogsheads of molasses, "thick red and of good flavour" his uncle had specified; raw creole sugar, "coarse pale red grains with no gray," and as many barrels of coffee as he could secure. Perhaps he could pick up some soap, and if there was still a credit balance he would take it in piastre gourds. His mind had become occupied by his probable transactions. "If all goes well," he added.

John Bush walked across the deck and studied the bright horizon toward the sea. In the east a headland lifted a smooth black cone and behind it there was a whitening of the sky that told him that the moon was rising. There was no riding-light set on the brig for prying eyes from the sea to observe, but the moon would disclose him; he regretted that he had not anchored closer to the town. Out there to the north, somewhere beyond the empty horizon was the frigate he had eluded. That was four days

ago, and perhaps even now she might be at anchor in the harbour of Port Royal. It was more than likely. He smiled as he thought of her swelling canvas and the English flag, a red spurt of bunting that had snapped out suddenly when he had hoisted his own colours. The *Lucy* had showed her heels and not a shot fired; no need to disclose the presence of her guns as long as the wind held.

If the frigate should suddenly appear? He had anticipated his action. It would be a case of slipping his cables and making a run for it. At all events, he would do well to attend to his business with promptitude. Monsieur Samatan had urged it. The lean black merchant had no desire to see a profitable transaction interrupted by British men-of-war. What would they do to Bush? He had shrugged his shoulders expressive of his inability to become concerned; that was Bush's problem. Some rotting hulk, perhaps, or Dartmoor. At all events, it would be the end of the Yankee brig *Lucy,* and it would terminate with embarrassing abruptness the career of John Bush, captain and merchant, and also the liberty of the twelve Americans who constituted his crew. Altogether considered, French San Domingo was not as safe as the open sea.

Again he studied the horizon. The long black line of the sea stretched unbroken. With sudden resolution he walked to the companion-way and ran

lightly down the steep stairs to his cabin. It was a large room occupying the entire stern. A heavy Turkey carpet covered the deck and the woodwork was of yellow mahogany. Damask curtains were drawn across the four stern windows and in their middle rose the rudder case, carved and gilded like a Corinthian column. A velvet cloth covered the table, and behind the glass in a large cabinet on the port bulkhead were rows of wine-glasses secured in racks. It was a luxurious cabin, more like the quarters of the officer of a great merchantman ; a surprising cabin to be found in a brig of one hundred and sixty tons.

From a locker Bush selected a pair of white Kerseymere trousers and a light blue coat, double-breasted, with brass buttons. At a glass inset in the panel of the locker he adjusted his neck-piece and brushed the heavy mass of yellow hair back from his forehead. Unconsciously he regarded himself, a well-built, thin-hipped, broad-shouldered young man of perhaps five and twenty, with a fine head firm set on a neck that inclined a little too much to heaviness ; that was the only fault. His eyes were blue, wide, alert, and restless ; his smooth-shaved face gave prominence to a mouth large and humorous, and in the corners of the eyes were tiny wrinkles that also denoted humour.

In the self-assured smile and the bright blue coat there was little to indicate the Quaker that he was,

or had been until the scandal in the Friends School, a scandal in which John Bush had been the admitted offender, and which had practically severed his relations with his family. But when William Bush had closed the heavy walnut front door literally and permanently on his sixteen-year-old offspring, the equally massive door of his uncle, Matthew Gildersleave, had as promptly opened to the outcast. Perhaps it was because of the old bachelor's affection for his sister who had died to bring John into the world, or perhaps it was because of his attraction to the reckless, care-free boy. Probably both motives actuated him. At all events, John found a new home, and a more congenial one. Uncle Matthew limped from a wound he had received under General Anthony Wayne in 1794 when he crushed the Indians at the Rapids of Maumee. He had fought two duels in his youth, and until recent years his business had been of ships, the sea, strange cargoes, and distant places. It was a background that endeared the errant boy to the elderly man.

It had been of Matthew Gildersleave's connivance that John Bush had first seen blue water. They had talked all one night in the high library and the next afternoon he had accompanied his uncle to the counting-house of Mr. Stephen Girard on North Water Street. He remembered the peculiar fascination of the closed right eyelid of

the great merchant and he recalled the high bald head, the long nose, and the pointed jaw that seemed to sink into the loose collar about his throat. The result of this meeting was his departure a month later on the ship *Good Friends* to Leghorn and the Isle of France.

In the years that followed many people and events played a vital part in the formation of the young man's character ; but, strange though it may seem, the few women who crossed his path received but little more than a passing glance from his blue eyes. Had he cared to recall the dramatic incidents which so filled his life he would have narrated the story of a pirate attack in Sunda Straits, of a shipwreck the first year he went to sea, on the west coast of South America, of a battle with the Moors in the Mediterranean, and of storms innumerable. He was a man of open skies and plunging seas, inured to hardship, of rare physical strength and endurance. And yet with all the sterner characteristics that comprised his nature there was an emotionalism, elusive but often present, that gave to him a gentleness which occasionally disguised his true self in the eyes of those who did not know him. That he possessed such a quality makes even more strange his unconscious disregard of the women whom from time to time he casually encountered. He was neither shy nor reticent ; he was oblivious to all things except the joys of danger and the

intoxication of adventure. Probably it was this very masculinity which, having protected him for so many years, caused him at last to love with that same romantic passion that he gave to adventure and the sea. But of this side of Bush's character more will be said at a later place.

It was perhaps a little more than two years later when Matthew Gildersleave proposed a partnership and made John captain and half-owner in the brig *Lucy*. In that year war was declared with Great Britain, and for a time on the *Atlas,* privateer, under Captain Moffet, John Bush served an apprenticeship in naval warfare. The experience taught him little that was new to him, but the tremendous game of pursuit and escape or capture appealed to him, and when the *Atlas* went finally to the bottom off the Carolinas, he made his way back to Philadelphia and armed the *Lucy* as his own command under a letter of marque secured by the approving Matthew Gildersleave. It was a perilous game in the English-infested waters of the Atlantic coast, but luck and daring gave to John Bush on different occasions three rich prizes and more times than he remembered he defied the crimson flag of the English ships from the racing deck of the *Lucy*. That he was equipped by experience for the command must be evident when we consider that in the nine years that had intervened since his separation from his father's household he had spent his life

constantly at sea, sailing ships of Stephen Girard to practically every port of the navigable world.

His dressing completed, he put out the candles which swung from brass gimbles against the panels and climbed the companion-way to the deck.

"Luke!" he called.

From the forecastle hatch a great negro appeared and came toward him with a quick lithe stride that seemed almost animal, a suggestion heightened by the soft pat-pat of his bare feet on the deck.

"The boat. I am going ashore."

The black swung over the bulwark and lowered himself to the chains. Then he reappeared, a painter in his hand, and led the boat forward to the gangway. Bush seated himself in the stern-sheets.

"Huggett," he called.

A man's head appeared above the rail and looked down, peering into the darkness.

"I am going to the town. I shall return in two hours. You know the orders if anything happens."

The head nodded violently, the tarred queue bobbing at his neck. "Ay, ay, sir."

Over his shoulder Bush watched the *Lucy* with a curious emotion that came over him every time he left her. The moon was up, and in the soft white light the brig stood sharply defined, a clean-cut hull with two tall tapering masts rising incredibly high above her narrow deck. She had served him well, he thought. The small fortune that he

possessed was due to her. If this voyage prospered——

The boat bumped against the landing.

"Two hours, Luke; wait!" The great negro nodded and made a chuckling sound in his throat. He was a mute, for his tongue had been cut off by an officer of Dessalines as punishment for his refusal to disclose the hiding-place of his French master, when, the French having been finally expelled from the island in 1804, a general massacre was ordered of all those who were suspected of having connived at the acts of the evicted army. But Bush had discounted this disability in the light of his personal devotion, and for years the negro, a freed man, had served him like a slave.

The landing was dark, and except for the moon the town was practically unlighted. But only three squares from the water-front there was a yellow glow of candles through glassless windows and the persistent strumming of a guitar indicated the location of the Hôtel de la République. Wide doors opened to the street. Within, there was hum of voices, the clinking of glasses, and the pleasant aroma of wine and the kindred spirits.

From the door Bush surveyed the room and its occupants. At a near table a group of officers of the King sat clustered; their black faces, heavy lips, and flattened noses in strange contrast to the gorgeous brilliance of their red coats, bullion en-

crusted, and white trousers. Casually he looked about for Monsieur Samatan, but Monsieur Samatan was not there. He was relieved; there was now no business obligation to detain him.

On a previous voyage to Le Cap, a couple of years past, Bush had met, at the house of one of the white residents, Leroy Mangan, his ward, a dark-eyed, slender girl whose appealing beauty and gentleness had made strong impress on his imagination. In the months that followed, his thoughts had often reverted to those few hours they had had together. Vividly he could recall a ride they had taken along a mountain road to the ruined plantation of Marchegol from where they had looked down over the town and the bay and the plains to the distant mountains. But he remembered less the beauty of the view than the low voice of Virginie Goutier as she had sat erect upon her horse and told him in liquid French words the tragic story of the country's past.

It was she who filled his thoughts during the present voyage, and as each mile of foaming wake ran from beneath the *Lucy's* stern he felt increase in him the thrill of a new adventure, a thrill he had never before experienced, the thrill of a man who goes to meet the woman whom he loves. It was for this reason he had dressed so carefully and come ashore that evening; justifying to himself his impatience by the excuse that he hoped again

to see Monsieur Samatan, which was neither true nor necessary. He glanced at the clock. It was too early to present himself at the house of Mademoiselle Goutier's guardian.

He strode through the room between crowding tables, dogs gliding out from beneath his feet, to the far side. At one of the small tables sat two negroes. They were dressed in the white linen worn by the French planters, with much flash of jewels on black thick fingers and glittering gold fobs and chains at their waists.

"Ah, Monsieur Bush!" The elder of the two had spied him approaching and sprang from his seat to extend a welcome. "And the *Lucy,* she has carried you here? Ah, it is indeed good to see you, Monsieur le Capitaine."

Monsieur le Capitaine shook hands solemnly with his black acquaintance and as gravely received an introduction to the other. Then he tipped back in his chair and little wrinkles of a smile began to twitch the corners of his mouth.

"Fortune seems to have smiled on you, Monsieur Égalité. Perhaps it means that the King recognizes the worth of a loyal subject." He waved a summons to the waiter. "A bottle of French wine and glasses," he commanded.

"And fortune has not deserted you, Monsieur Bush," Égalité answered. "There is much money to be had by those who carry desired merchandise

past the guard of the English ships." He raised his glass to Bush and drank the clear yellow wine. "The King will make this fair country rich again. Great works are in progress. But it will be wealth for the black men"—he gave Bush a quick glance from small red eyes. "There will be no more white rule here; no holding of lands by the white men."

Bush nodded gravely. "Perhaps, Monsieur Égalité," he said, "this millennium of which you speak will make difficult such trading business as I would wish to establish here; perhaps you have in mind to have your own ships and your own merchants?"

The negro shook his head. "We must do business with you, in your way." He raised a great black hand, diamonds glittering with fleeting glints in the candlelight. "And we will be friends, but that is all!"

"His Majesty is well?" Bush changed the topic abruptly.

"Ah, yes, and the great fortress of La Ferrière! From the harbour you can see it on the mountain-top. In all the world there is no place more secure from an enemy. It is a monument to the genius of the King."

Bush lifted his glass. "To the King, Christophe!" The three glasses met above the table.

"And how are Monsieur Mangan and his ward?" The smile still lurked in the corners of

Bush's mouth, but now a singular intensity seemed to pass across his eyes, a fleeting expression denoting a thought more serious to him than he cared to disclose. The suggestion, however, of a deeper significance to the simple question did not altogether escape the negro and he hesitated, as though from embarrassment, for the answer.

"My good friend, Monsieur Loup," he nodded to his companion across the table, "can tell you more recent news of your friends. I have myself not seen Monsieur Mangan for several weeks, and Mademoiselle Virginie, it is months since I have seen her so great beauty."

"Monsieur Mangan is well." Monsieur Loup took up the conversation. "He is much occupied with the great affairs the King has placed on his shoulders. It is said that Mademoiselle is betrothed to Captain Nicholas."

The glass half-lifted in Bush's hand clinked sharply on the table; his mouth set suddenly, a thin straight line above the square jaw. "And who may be Captain Nicholas?" he asked bluntly.

The broad chest of Monsieur Loup expanded and a smile disclosed his huge white teeth and fleshy gums. "Captain Nicholas is a man of much education, Monsieur Bush; for five years in Paris he enjoyed the best advantages of that centre of civilization. Here he is an honoured officer attached to the bodyguard of the King. He is

rich, for the King has conferred on him much land——" He paused, uncertain how to continue, but something more was straining at his lips.

"He is——" Bush spoke as though the words lay dry upon his tongue.

"He is a man of colour? Ah, *oui!*"

"Let us have another bottle of this most charming wine," Égalité hurriedly broke in. "It is so seldom that the daring Captain Bush comes to us." He babbled along confusedly, the French words pouring from his mouth like water from a glass. What he would have hesitated to say, Monsieur Loup had stated with assurance, pride, and probably not without malice. It was seldom that Monsieur Loup could give so stinging a blow to a white man.

"Of course you will understand, my dear Captain, that this is perhaps not, I would say, definitely arranged, but Monsieur Mangan enjoys much wealth and security from the King, and an alliance between the two families could not but be fortunate."

"I have never met Captain Nicholas," Bush interrupted. "He is indeed to be congratulated." The sarcasm in his voice passed unnoticed. "I have known Mademoiselle Virginie but slightly." He rose from his chair. "Monsieur Égalité, it has been a pleasure to have seen you; we must meet again before I sail." He held out his hand to Loup. "And to you I also owe my gratitude for

this most interesting information. May I ask you a single question before I go? What sort of a man is this Captain Nicholas?''

The negro dropped his gaze before the steady stare of the blue eyes that regarded him. ''Ah, a fine fellow and, as I have said, a scholar.'' Then the suggestion of malevolence again hardened his black face and he lifted his eyes boldly. ''A fair man; yes, quite white,'' he continued blandly, ''a great swordsman and a man of the world, a gay dog, would you not agree, Monsieur Égalité?''

Bush bowed. ''Good-night, *mes amis;* I regret that I cannot remain longer with you.'' And with his curious swinging stride he threaded his way between chairs and tables to the door.

For five minutes at least Bush stood in an angle of a wall trying to bring to order the wild thoughts that seethed in his brain. It was very still, a breathless tropic night. So many and so bright were the stars that the sky seemed radiant and pale, and now high in the east the full moon flooded trees and buildings with its light and flung dense black shadows from every object that interposed. Some twenty yards away the open door of the Hôtel de la République glowed, a yellow square against the white plastered wall of the building. Above it a balcony protruded across the front and several lighted windows gave indication of occupancy within. Now and then the swell of voices

and the tinkle of a broken glass came through the door. On the outskirts of the town a cock crowed shrilly and some dogs began to bark in noisy chorus.

The world seemed bright as day, but yet illumined by a light that disclosed only its sad beauty. Across the dirt road white walls, crumbled and scorched by flames, were half-hidden by vines and flowers. Through the massive iron grill of a broken gate was a courtyard and beyond were other walls, ruined and blackened beneath their dress of clambering green. Even the wall in whose angle he stood showed the marks of fire and violence. So it was with the whole town, he recollected. A city of ruined magnificence, buried now in luxuriant tropic verdure; a town of flimsy houses, of filth and barbaric magnificence, a town of black citizens ruled by a black despot. Across the street was the ruined mansion where but a dozen years before had lived Pauline, sister of Napoleon Bonaparte and wife of Captain-General Le Clerc, who with thirty thousand troops had come to restore the island to France. But the yellow fever and the black soldiers of the patriots practically annihilated the picked troops of Napoleon, and the shattered remnant of the army besieged in Le Cap had finally surrendered to the English fleet in the harbour. All the tragic history of the island seemed pictured in these moonlit ruins: the early days of Spanish rule in the years following

Columbus ; the era of the French, that era of vast plantations and stone villas among the palm-trees ; and then the uprisings of the negroes and the vain expeditions of the French and English to subdue the liberated slaves. And in the recent years these walls recalled names new to history : Toussaint, the slave who led the revolt ; Dessalines, the negro Emperor who followed him ; and now Henri Christophe, the King.

In the peace of the night he recalled the stories he had so often heard of that terrible year of 1793 when the slaves of San Domingo, rising against their masters, had made desolate the great plain, burned the villas of the French planters and left Le Cap a mass of blackened ruins. In the general massacre of the whites had perished Virginie's father, Charles Goutier, and the young English bride whom he had but two years before brought home with him from her father's station at Jamaica. What had been the association between Goutier and Leroy Mangan that caused the latter to assume charge of the infant child, Bush had never known. Spared for some reason by the blacks, Mangan had for many years following the revolt held a singular position. He was rich, he was a man of education, a Frenchman, some said a renegade member of a noble family, and he was a friend of Christophe, le roi Henri. That he and his wife had faithfully reared the child through her girlhood and provided

for her everything that Mangan's great wealth could secure, no one could deny. Then, when madame had died, Virginie had been sent away for two years' study in France. And she had been brought back to conduct the household of her benefactor, to be finally bartered, a bride to a man of colour, a helpless pawn in the intrigue of the black Kingdom of the negro King, Christophe.

As he stood in the dark angle of the wall the full horror of the situation began fully to appear to him. The words of Monsieur Loup had come with an abruptness that had stunned him. Now he was thinking more clearly. He saw the tremendous difficulties and he saw, too, the almost complete helplessness of the girl. Her grave dark eyes and her red laughing mouth seemed to summon him. A new emotion, overwhelming in its intensity, swept over him.

With his swinging stride he was off down the street. Here and there through the broken walls he caught glimpses of the harbour, brilliant in the moonlight. The road led north along the shore, then turning sharply to the left it climbed in a gentle grade upward toward the low foothills of Le Morne. Its rutted surface was unclean with scattered refuse that at times tainted the air and mingled its acrid smells with the odour of flowers along the way and the humid night smell of the dense vegetation.

Two gateposts of white stone flanked the entrance to the grounds of Leroy Mangan. Within, the enclosure was black with shade, but the white twist of the drive directed him. The house, which he could barely see between some giant mangoes, was a two-story building and the balconies which surrounded it were draped heavily with vines. Then a wide-open door came into view, and his feet found the steps.

The black servant had announced him and almost immediately Virginie appeared from an inner room. John Bush had remembered her beauty and her gentleness, but he stood for a moment confused and speechless as she walked toward him, her two hands almost childishly extended to greet him. She was dressed in white with bare neck and shoulders around which a black lace shawl hung with clinging touch, and against her breast a single poinsettia was caught by a diamond clasp.

"Oh, it is you!" she exclaimed. "How can I tell you how glad I am to see you?" Her voice was low, but it possessed a certain sweet bell-like quality that gave distinctness to her words. She spoke in English, exquisitely, but with a faint French accent that was altogether delightful.

Fascinated with the contagion of her impetuosity, Bush caught her two hands and met the frank gaze of her great dark eyes. Her lips were very red, and as she spoke her small even teeth glittered with

incredible whiteness. Then a self-consciousness came over him, and he pulled at his square jaw with his hand, a nervous gesture that denoted his momentary embarrassment. She was lovely, a glorious creature; he had last seen her in her perfect girlhood, but now she was a woman, and in the depths of her eyes he saw an understanding, a realization of something of the problem of the life which in her had reached the perfect bloom.

"It is not for one of the Society of Friends to pay compliments to the gentler sex," he laughed with a twist of his lips as he spoke, "but having so far separated myself, by force of circumstances, from that sect, I will not hesitate to crave your pardon for my awkwardness, which can be blamed to nothing but yourself."

"To me? I did not think you awkward. But if you were in some way, why do you blame it on me?"

He saw a glimmer of laughter in her eyes.

"Mademoiselle, will you make it more hard for me, a humble Quaker captain of a trading brig? Must I tell you why?"

He half-seated himself on the table behind him that he might the better watch her as he spoke.

"I require it," she replied.

"Then, it is because I am overwhelmed to find you as you are. In this sad country it is indeed a rose that blooms beneath the roof of Leroy Mangan."

"Is it this Society of Friends that has taught you the phrases of the King's court?"

Bush felt the topic was leading him beyond his depth. "Come," he said, "can we not sit and talk for a while? I would like to learn of all that has happened to you since we last met. These have been long years, although few. And I will tell you of my adventures; humble enough, perhaps, but of some interest to those who are my friends. I do not presume, mademoiselle, in that inclusion?"

She beckoned with a slight gesture and they crossed the room to a doorway that opened on the garden behind the house. In the soft light of the dozen candles that burned in a candelabrum within a huge glass globe on the table, he saw at his side the white smoothness of her bare shoulders, the fine poise of the slender neck, and the curves of her breast that rose and fell beneath the crimson blossom of the poinsettia. An emotion overwhelming in its intensity seized him. He dared not think of Nicholas; he dared not mention again the name of Mangan; he felt the cords of his neck tense with anger.

Stone flags paved the terrace and beyond the single step a white path led straight into the blackness of the trees. A small fountain on the right in an open space trickled audibly and the moonlight made the tiny jet seem a quivering silver thread.

They sat down on a garden seat in the moonlight, each conscious of a vague sentiment that surrounded them, a sentiment young and fragrant as the sweet odours that hung on the still night air. For a while they talked of those material happenings that had constituted the sequence of the past few years. Guardedly, Bush felt, she spoke of her drives on the plain and in the foothills of Le Morne; there was a hesitancy to speak of other things. Perhaps he would have done well to have analyzed his thoughts and sentiments. Had he done so he would have recognized the fact that he had fallen irrevocably in love with this slender, dark-eyed girl beside him, that the vague memories of the past two years were to-night crystallized into a splendid reality. Alone in a world of adventure he had cherished her delicate memory as a man in solitude will sentimentalize about the picture of an unknown and beautiful woman. But to-night here was the reality; the moonlight touched the white shoulders of the girl of whom he had thought in vague terms of sentiment in those long dark hours when he had paced the narrow deck of the *Lucy*. Beneath those white shoulders was a warm, living body, and in her quick glances in the lighted room he had recognized a woman to whom thoughts of love and romance were frequent visitors.

"Are you happy, Virginie?" It was the first time he had called her by that name, but his pre-

sumption was unnoticed by her in the shock of his unexpected question.

She looked at him, startled, her face in the shadow, the moon glinting through her hair.

"My dear friend, I am not happy." Her voice was very low, but he could detect no tremble of emotion.

"It is not my right to ask, but as a friend, you will forgive me? If I can aid you——"

"Do you know? Have you heard something that made you ask that?"

"Yes."

They were silent. The stillness of the hot clear night seemed suddenly oppressive. The trickle of the fountain sounded loud and metallic. Within the house a clock struck the hour.

"How can I serve you?"

She did not answer. Then he saw her shoulders quiver and her head droop, her face buried in her slim hands. "Oh, how alone I am, how miserable! I am helpless. It is his will. There is no escape."

He caught her hand in his, and lifted the fingers, moist with tears, to his lips.

"Virginie, some way can be found. Be brave. Resist a little longer."

There was a sound behind them, a footfall within the house. A chair grated as it was jostled on the floor. A shadow flicked across the candlelight.

Virginie rose to her feet. "Quick, monsieur; we

must not be found here. It is my guardian ; he has returned early. Can you forget what has been spoken? It is best so."

He leaned over her, his mouth seeking her ear until he felt her hair against his cheek and sensed its fragrance. "I shall never forget. I, too, am alone. But there is a way, and I shall find it."

Leroy Mangan stood, a black shadow, in the doorway.

"Virginie," he called.

"I am here, uncle." They had risen from the seat and already were on the terrace. "Who, do you think, is here? It is Captain Bush of Philadelphia ; it is two years since we last saw him !"

Mangan bowed stiffly. He was a tall, lean man with a narrow face beneath his long gray hair. The mouth was the striking feature, a small mouth with a loose, sensuous lower lip. His black clothes were severe and unrelieved by ornament, except at the throat where a single emerald in a heavy gold setting gleamed like an eye against the whiteness of his fluted stock.

John Bush recalled the sinister face, but now in the light of his recent information it assumed an evil aspect that he had not previously attached to it. He had remembered Mangan, not so gray or lean then, an austere, cold man of faultless formal courtesy.

In the awkward pause Virginie felt a situation

developing ; with an apparently unconscious movement she put her hand on Mangan's shoulder.

"May we not invite the captain to stay with us a little longer? He had hoped to find you. I am sure he must have interesting news of the war and of America."

Mangan took a step to the side of the doorway. "I regret," he said, "that the hour is so late. Captain Bush realizes that conditions at Le Cap are far from desirable for those who walk its streets after sunset. I am sure he will find his ship a more desirable place in which to spend his evenings."

A flare of heat burned in Bush's cheeks ; he felt his neck tighten and his hands tremble with anger. In all the world for a flashing second, his one desire was to strike the expressionless face that calmly regarded him. But all he did was to bow and then to send from his steady blue eyes one penetrating look into the eyes of Mangan. If he had expected them to drop before that look of disgust and hate, he was mistaken. The imperturbable face was mask-like. For the sake of the girl whose delicate hand rested on this creature's arm he withheld his impulse.

"Mademoiselle"—he spoke slowly with the quaint drawl of his people—"I shall accept the advice of Monsieur Mangan. It is perhaps best that so pleasant an evening should sometime end."

As he turned to cross the room, their eyes for a passing moment met, and in that quick glance Bush read her appeal of entreaty and fear. It was the look of a hunted creature, a look that haunted him far into the future.

John Bush went ashore the following morning shortly after sunrise, but even at that early hour the heat was beginning to quiver over the marshes south of the town and the air in the streets was hot and lifeless. As Luke had rowed him in from the brig, he noticed with interest the square structure that capped one of the high peaks of the mountain-range that lifted its serrate wall beyond the flat sweep of the plain, perhaps thirty miles away. It was the great fortress of the King of which Égalité had spoken, a tremendous stronghold perched on the peak of a mountain three thousand feet above the surrounding valleys.

In the strong morning light the town of Le Cap disclosed its squalor and desolation. Everywhere ruined stone walls, smoked and scorched, recalled the one-time splendour of the French city, and in the angles of these same walls shambling frame houses with thatched roofs of palm indicated the character of the present inhabitants. A few of the older buildings remained, spared from the general destruction by some special privilege, fine buildings of white stone and stucco embowered in the green of tropic gardens. The Hôtel de la République was

deserted, and the dark low room was cool and odorous of the last night's hospitality.

Bush took a seat by the door and a few minutes later Monsieur Samatan crossed the threshold. The merchant was a tall, well-built mulatto with regular features and straight black hair. His even teeth of glittering whiteness emphasized the frequent smile that hovered beneath his waxed moustaches, and a small goatee gave to his fine thin face an air of distinction. Monsieur Samatan was perhaps fifty years of age, a man of culture and refinement, and particularly a man of immense power in the community, due to his wealth and the high regard which was everywhere accorded him. He wore a striped blue-and-white suit of fine linen, and as he sat down across the table from Bush he removed the huge straw hat which almost concealed his face beneath its voluminous drooping brim. For an hour they discussed the negotiation of the *Lucy's* cargo and arriving at terms mutually agreeable sealed them with pale rum and water.

It was five days later that John Bush again found himself in the Hôtel de la République. During those five days he had laboured relentlessly, and not only was the *Lucy's* cargo now safe in the ample warehouse of Monsieur Samatan, but already a small part of the coffee he had purchased was between the decks. With Huggett he had worked his none too safe crew and the gang of black roustabouts far

into each night, for with every passing day increased the possibility of a sail, and if one were sighted the chances were strong that she would fly the flag of England. To cut and run would in such an instance be imperative, although hazardous ; to remain would spell instant capture.

In these five busy days Bush had not again seen Virginie Goutier, but the thought of her was never long from his mind. Time did not heal the smart of Monsieur Mangan's discourtesy ; rather the rankling of the insult had engendered a hate that would have boded ill for his safety had his path crossed that of the blue-eyed Philadelphian. But the instinctive impetuosity of Bush was ever shaded by a creditable caution and a recognition of attendant circumstances. He had restrained himself that evening when Mangan had showed him to the door, with the realization that only evil could come from violence and that Virginie's happiness and safety would be jeopardized by an open break between himself and her guardian. And for the same reason he had suppressed the inclination of his heart and attended strictly to the unloading of the brig. To call again at the house of Mangan would only precipitate the issue. He should not go there again until a plan had been formulated for the rescue of Virginie ; but what that plan was troubled him sorely.

He had left the warehouse of Monsieur Samatan

at seven in the evening with the intention of going immediately on board the *Lucy* which was now anchored not more than a half-mile from the landing. But as he turned down the long straight street that ran parallel with the water-front, he saw black clouds piled high against the distant mountain and the flicker of lightning warned him that within perhaps half an hour a tropical storm would break over the town. Such storms were always of short duration, but of immoderate violence. He glanced at his fine blue coat with its gleaming buttons ; it would not be well to let this, his best apparel suffer from the downpour. Three squares away the Hôtel de la République suggested friendly refuge. There he could dine until the rain was over.

The long low room was crowded and the air pungent with tobacco smoke and the smells of cooking. Officers of Christophe filled the tables, gay uniforms contrasting with the striped suits of cotton or linen of the civilians. All were black ; black ranging from the ebony of full-blooded negroes to the light tan of the men of colour. French was their speech, a hum of Gallic words like the sound of swarming bees.

A waiter in a soiled apron served the soup to Bush from a silver tureen. A crest decorated its swelling side, but one of the handles was missing. It recalled to Bush the days of the uprising ; doubtless a bit of plunder this, snatched by the looters

from the burning villa of a French family. He examined the knife and fork beside his plate. The knife was a cheap thing of steel and bone, but the battered fork was silver, of graceful design ; another crest was barely discernible on the handle.

The rum flowed copiously and now and then wine was opened, the pop of the cork sounding like a distant pistol-shot. At the next table five men were dining, and Bush watched them with idle interest as the bottles were opened with increasing frequency and their voices grew proportionately louder as they drank. They were in uniform, officers all, and from the heavy bullion on their green coats he identified them as probably attached to some crack regiment of Christophe. They were discussing the King's great fortress and their ignorant boasting amused him. Then the talk turned to the King's court at the Palace of Sans Souci and the coarse stories of licentiousness made him regard them with a disgust that might have been read in his face.

One of the five, a short, effeminate-looking mulatto, rose unsteadily to his feet. With amusement Bush watched his swaying figure and the filled glass in his unsteady hand slop its contents on the man at his right. He began to address a companion across the table, a man whose face Bush could not see, but he had noticed the fine build of the broad straight shoulders beneath the trim coat

and he had wondered at the whiteness of the skin as he observed its colour beneath the straight black hair that was tied with a bit of ribbon at his neck.

"*Mon cher* Nicholas——" said the little man. Like a slap across the face the name galvanized Bush into rigid attention. The impending marriage; the mulatto babbled on drunkenly and then sat suddenly down. From his chair Nicholas rose heavily and lifted a brimming glass. He was affected by the wine that he had been drinking, but he was still in command of himself.

Leaning across the table Bush's ears strained for the words. Nicholas was responding to the toast. In the most polished French he recounted a coarse story. The very refinement of his voice and manner magnified its grossness. His comrades were laughing immoderately. He was still talking. Suddenly from his lips fell a sentence that for a moment made Bush sit rigid in his chair. Clear above the tumult of the room he heard the name of Virginie. The vile boast of this cultured half-breed about the white girl whom he was to wed burned like fire across the brain of the Philadelphian.

With a single movement Bush leaped from his chair. There was a crash of shattered china and the small table rolled across the floor. He saw Nicholas turn toward him a heavy white face, and then between the startled eyes he felt his fist smash

like a hammer and he saw Nicholas drop at the impact across the table-top. There was a silence; then a tumult filled the room. Everyone was standing, jostling to catch a better view. The little mulatto was screaming vile words in a high shrill voice. An ominous note grew stronger in the roar of voices. From the table Nicholas was being lifted to his feet; his face was smeared with bright red blood. A thin sword blade glittered at the side of the mulatto, and Bush saw a knife in the hand of the officer who had sat at the left hand of Nicholas. The mulatto was edging his way around the table, the thin blade gleaming in the candlelight.

If Bush had ever been required to recount what happened in the three or four minutes which immediately followed, he would probably have been unable to give a coherent answer. His blow had been one of those precipitate and spontaneous acts that are committed without thought of consequences by even the most conservative of men when some word or deed causes them to throw reason to the winds and obey the urge of instinct. As a white man, he was at best barely tolerated at Le Cap; it required only some act such as he had just committed to turn everything against him.

There was a rush toward him. A pistol roared like a cannon; a bullet grazed his ear, and a pall of powder smoke stifled him. With his back to

the wall he swung the chair in which he had been sitting and saw the face of the mulatto sink suddenly beneath it. It was a chair solidly built and again he swung it in a half-circle that cleared an open place before him. He was now near the door. A black hand reached for his throat. He snatched a table knife and stabbed blindly. There was the door! The crowd was pressing forward. With his left hand he groped for his pistol; his fingers found it; he levelled it at the crowd.

"The first man who crosses that door I'll kill," he shouted.

Then he slipped around the door frame to the street. The rain was falling in a deluge, the road was a quagmire. From the sky the lightning quivered in recurrent green-white flashes. How long would they wait before someone followed him through the door? A minute at the most. That would be his start. He ran as he had never run before, for death followed. There were no passers on the street, but here and there a light shone in a house. The rain beat against his face; in the glare of the lightning he saw the road as through a silver curtain of falling water, black gleaming with muddy pools.

The pistol was still clutched in his hand, but the priming was wet and it was worthless. He glanced over his shoulder. In a quivering flash he saw a crowd of black figures about the door of the inn.

He dodged around a corner. There was the landing!

"Luke!" he shouted. The mute stepped out from the shelter of a shed.

With the negro he scrambled down to the landing-stage and flung free the painter. Already Luke had the oars in the water. The boat shot forward and the dock disappeared in the blackness. In the far distance Bush heard cries and the sound of pistol-shots. For the time being he was safe.

THE morning was glorious. Cool and steady the off-shore wind drove the *Lucy* northward across a sea of unbelievable blue, beneath an azure sky. On the poop-deck John Bush watched with half-shut eyes the retreating coastline of the island. Far inland the great green mountains rose like a wall behind the plain, a palisade of lofty peaks that notched the horizon like a saw. But in the foreground at the water's edge was a single peak, separate and nearer than its fellows. It was Le Morne, and at its foot, in the flooding sunrise, was Le Cap Française and the harbour where rested at this moment one of the *Lucy's* anchors and five fathoms of good hempen cable cut clean with an axe and abandoned not twelve hours ago.

With the vestige of a smile in his blue eyes Bush recollected the incidents of that crowded evening of yesterday. He recalled the drenching tropic downpour as Luke pulled the light boat from the landing to the *Lucy,* a brief row of some few vital minutes during which, sitting half-turned in the sternsheets, he had watched the landing and the town shimmer into a vivid black-and-white picture with every quiver of lightning, a picture viewed through a mist

of falling rain. Then a lantern, like a yellow spark, had jerked along the shore. High, excited voices told him the human hounds were on his trail.

Huggett was waiting at the top of the ladder when Bush climbed on board. In the faint gleam of the anchor light his black tarpaulin glistened like glass in the downpour; a varnished straw hat flung his face into complete shadow and dripped water like a gutter.

"Late! Been expecting you fur two hours." He spoke with the indescribable inflection of the Maine Yankee, and with the manner of a man who, although recognizing perfectly his subordinate position before his captain, at the same time felt fully the responsibilities of his own office. Perhaps there was even more that could be deduced from those few spoken words, for to one familiar with the speech and manner of Thomas Huggett there would be evident a certain rude affection for his young captain, a paternal interest that this gray-haired sailor of fifty winter seas held for the younger man. Of Huggett's early history Bush knew but a few scattered details. He had been born and considered his home in Calais, Maine, but Huggett appears never to have married, and it is doubtful if he had seen the town of his birth for many years. As a youngster in 1779 he had cruised with the *Ranger* on her voyage off the Bermudas, an uneventful voyage, but the beginning

of his seafaring career. He was a short, red-faced man with a tarred queue, and the backs of his blunt and never too clean hands were blue with the crude tracings of tattooing, a compass star, foul anchors, and a snake around the right wrist.

Bush had come to the point hurriedly. The rain was stopping. On the shore more lights were moving about. Before long a boat would unquestionably be put off. If he refused to let them on board they might try to take the *Lucy* by force. No good could come from such a situation.

"Get the men on deck and make sail."

He measured with his eye the distance to the shore and studied the direction of the wind. It was blowing strong and directly out to sea. No time to weigh anchor. The wind would keep her off shore; they could put sail on her while she drifted. He picked a boarding-axe out of the rack and went forward. As he ran, the boatswain's pipe was trilling and a sound of voices came from the forecastle scuttle, voices of men awakened from heavy sleep. There was much swearing; then he heard them coming up the ladder to the deck. With a stroke of the axe he severed the starboard cable at the hawse-pipe, and the *Lucy* was free.

Someone had fired a gun as they drifted past the town. The stars were out again and shone on the great gray foresail that was already swelling in the breeze. They were in plain view now, the ghost

of a ship sliding faster and faster over a black sea in the starlight. Then from behind the flying clouds came the moon. Far astern a longboat lay with idle oars in the soft light. He was out of it none too soon.

Bush came out of his reverie with a start; it was Huggett's voice at his shoulder. "We're well clear of the land, sir; how shall I steer?"

For an hour, while he watched the receding hills, that question had been uppermost in his mind. "Lay her well north of Tortuga and then make for the Mole," he answered. Then, squaring himself until he faced the stolid countenance of Huggett, he continued in a lower tone: "I don't know what the men think, but let it be as they will. They know well enough about what happened. I want you to know the whole yarn, though, Mr. Huggett, but not now. We are going to the Mole for more coffee. That sounds reasonable, and there may be some there. Perhaps I'll have you take the brig home without me." He gave a swift glance at the distant shore. "I'm deep in something serious, Mr. Huggett. I'll ask you to serve me in your best style."

Huggett's red hand hitched at his waistband. "Captain, ye ain't found Tom Huggett lacking yet." Out of the corner of his eye he caught the man at the wheel. "Keep her away there!" he roared as though repeating an order received from

the Captain. "Set the topsail, ye lubbers; lively now; loose the topgallant sail."

The *Lucy* was heeling over in the breeze, her windward shrouds taut as wires, and a wake of creamy water was reeling from beneath her stern. She was fast, with a graceful, narrow hull with fine, sharp bows and a clean run. Her flush decks were level and white from the constant application of sand and holystone, and above them rose her masts tall and slender, tapering to the trucks, slim sticks against the sky. Forward, the bowsprit reared with every sea, a long finger almost disproportionate to the size of the brig. Her bulwarks were high and substantial and were pierced on each side with two ports behind which, securely lashed to rings, were carronades covered with canvas. Aft on the fine stern was a long gun with a traversing slide inset in the pine deck. She was coppered to the bends, and as the wind caught her towers of canvas the burnished metal held the sunlight like fire and reflected its flame on the racing sea. With his feet steadied to meet the movement of the brig, Bush walked to the wheel. Against the walnut spokes the steersman clung bending against the rudder's urge, his eyes now watching the wind-filled sails and now fixed on the white compass card in the binnacle.

In the waist of the ship the watch were gathered in the lee of a small deckhouse, a half-dozen sailors clad in various garments which, while in no way

suggesting a uniform, yet characterized their wearers as men of many voyages on blue water. They were barefooted and the long absence of the razor gave them all a peculiarly unkempt appearance. With his yellow feet widespread to steady him, Sam Mogridge, the second mate, leaned against the water butt and yarned interminably to his audience. He was an insignificant man with close-set eyes that seemed to peer out over the bush of curly black beard that grew high up on his cheeks and extended just below the small retreating chin. He had wrapped a dirty cloth about his head which gave him an unusual appearance, and the blue shirt wide-open almost to his waist disclosed a square, flat chest matted with coarse, black hair. Could Captain Bush have overheard the remarks of Sam Mogridge at that moment he would perhaps have descended to his cabin with less unconcern, for the tenor of the second mate's remarks did not indicate that subordination which was supposed to characterize his speech and actions.

"A woman, mark ye." Mogridge shook a long, stained finger at the disappearing back of the captain. "Here we were set for a good cargo and a quick passage; and now, lads, where are we? Cruising up and down the coast to pick up a bit here and there, and to be picked up ourselves by the first English ship wot sights us."

"I guess, Sam, you never got messed up with

a woman,'' one of the men interjected. ''That Spanish girl at Cartagena, I'm thinking of. Seems like I remember you coming off in a canoe with yer arm in a sling and enough blood on yer face to paint a jolly-boat scarlet.''

The others laughed, and Mogridge eyed his inquisitor with disfavour. But at this juncture Huggett appeared around the corner of the deckhouse and the conversation abruptly turned its direction.

''As I was saying,'' Mogridge continued, ''it's fine white flour what gives the profit, but a hot hold spoils it if ye take no caution. Hard and rocky, heat makes it ; fit fur niggers, that's all.''

Huggett's mouth opened to add something to the discussion when a distant voice from above abruptly cut short the discussion and directed their eyes to the lookout, a tiny figure far aloft on the slender topgallant mast.

''Sail astern !''

The men sprang in unison into the main shrouds and scrambling up the ratlines peered from that greater height at the heaving horizon.

''There she is !'' someone shouted.

Huggett ran hurriedly to the cabin hatchway. ''Sail astern, sir,'' he repeated.

Almost instantly Bush's head and shoulders crowded up through the narrow opening. He was bareheaded and carried under his right elbow a leather-covered brass spyglass.

"What is she, Mr. Huggett?"

"Can't make her out, sir. Aloft there!" He took a voice trumpet from its catch beside the wheel and bellowed through it at the lookout. "How does she bear? Can you make her out?"

High against the blue sky the main truck darted in great swings with every lurch of the brig as though it sought to shake from his perilous place the watching sailor who clung there.

"Hull down!" came the small, distant voice.

"Keep her off a point; steady there!"

"Steady," echoed the man at the wheel.

Already the yards and rigging were alive with men, their eyes fixed on the white speck which now and then lifted above the horizon. From the poop Bush studied it through his glass.

"Mr Huggett," he called, "see what you can make out from the main yard." With surprising alacrity, the stocky figure of the mate scrambled up the taut weather shrouds to the maintop. For a long minute he peered from beneath hand-shaded eyes. "Hard to make her out," he finally reported. "She's on our course, I think."

The *Lucy* was heeling over sharply under the press of her canvas and from beneath her sharp cutwater the blue sea was swirling past her sides in a seething mill-race of foaming water. Every sail was stiff with the force of the wind and from the shrouds and stays came the hum as of harpstrings.

By noon the wind was blowing in heavy squalls that tore across the rising sea, churning its surface white with the crests of the waves and flattening it out beneath its touch. At each onset the *Lucy* settled as though pushed down by a giant hand, flying before the fury of the wind until every spar seemed bent to the breaking point. Now and then a heavy sea slopped over the dipping bow to send aft a torrent of soapy green water that sloshed back and forth until the sucking scuppers could carry it away. She was carrying every sail possible, for already the foretopsails had carried away with a sudden roar of bursting canvas. Bush was taking no chances of capture. In the speed of the brig he was confident ; if there were no unforeseen accidents he should be able at least to maintain his distance until nightfall and then it would be easy to elude the pursuer.

He ate hurriedly in his cabin, gulping the hot, bitter coffee until his throat was scalded. Again on deck his eyes watched fixedly the sharp, white object that now appeared well over the horizon. Whatever she was, she was clearly gaining. He studied his bending masts and crowding canvas. The *Lucy* could carry no more with safety, of that he was certain. He took the thick gold watch his uncle had given him on his twenty-first birthday from his belt. It was twenty minutes past two ; five hours of daylight remained.

The wind was freshening, and under the rising gale the *Lucy* raced onward, a swirl of parted water under her forefoot. Braced against the white painted rail of the poop Bush watched his pursuer and now and then gave a terse order to Huggett or directly to the seaman at the wheel. Two hours after the sail had been sighted, the lookout had hailed from above that she was now in full view and bearing up steadily, and half an hour later Bush made her out clearly from the deck, a corvette, undoubtedly, and racing handsomely under full sail before the wind.

Came four o'clock with a slight let-up in the following gale. The corvette was now in plain sight, and the men watched her with tense interest from various points of vantage. She was boiling through the sea, a white bone in her teeth, her clear black bends and white streak clearly visible. Now and then as she heeled under a sudden flaw her bright copper from stem to stern caught the flash from the setting sun, a sharp contrast to the tower of white canvas that swelled above her deck.

There was a sudden yellow spurt and a puff of white cloud from the forward deck of the corvette, and after what seemed a full minute came the dull report of a gun across the water. The shot fell short, far astern of the *Lucy*, with a plume of white spray torn from the blue water.

"Clear away the stern-chaser!" At the sound

of Bush's voice the men sprang at the long stern gun with an energy that had been steadily accumulating during the past few hours of inactivity. In a trice the canvas was whipped from the black barrel and the gun trained along its slides on the pursuer. Suddenly from the peak of the corvette a flag fluttered against the sky, the red cross of England.

"Hoist the colours!" With a rush the quartermaster ran to the halyards, and a moment later the Stars and Stripes broke from the peak.

With an unconscious enthusiasm Huggett swung his straw hat above his head. "Give 'em hell," he bellowed; "shoot straight, boys!"

A white squall bore down over the water, and the *Lucy* dived forward with a maddened plunge, the green water spurting through buried hawsepipes and a cloud of spray mounting like a mist to the foretop and driving aft, drenching the men in the waist. A cheer followed; the madness of the fight had seized them.

"All ready there?"

"All ready, sir." Stripped to the waist, his black straw hat jammed close about his ears, Huggett balanced on bare feet on the swinging poop.

"Fire!" There was a flash from the long gun and a rush backward of the heavy carriage; a dense cloud of white sulphurous smoke enveloped them.

From the corvette two spurts of flame spat from

the main deck and a puff of white smoke bent aft and clouded the hull. But now, instead of the following report of distant guns, a crackle of splintering wood from the mainmast and a shower of white splinters rattled on the deck. Snatching his voice trumpet, Huggett bawled his orders and the men swarmed up the shrouds to the damaged main yard.

Bush thrust his glass in an angle of the cabin skylight and ran to the side of the steersman. "Keep her off!" he shouted, his voice straining to compete with the roar of the flapping mainsail. "Loose topgallant sails, Mr. Huggett! Crack on all you have. Stand ready to rip the booms out, if the wind fails us."

Again leaning against the rail, Bush studied his pursuer. Once more came the spits of yellow from the gun ports and the white clouds of smoke from her deck, and a second or two later the round shot screamed past the *Lucy* a full hundred yards off the starboard.

"Clear away the larboard guns!" Again came the rush of bare feet on the rearing deck. From the waist hatches the men were whipping up the powder and round shot; there was a rattle of handspikes and the rumble of carriages as the guns were dragged inboard to be shotted, and again the rattling of the carriages as they were run out through the bulwark ports. Around the guns the

men clustered, naked except for their trousers, black tarred queues against sunburned necks, tattooed hands fingering lanyards and breechings. From the bows came the roar of crashing water and from aloft the song of wind-swept rigging, but the decks were silent, awaiting the order of the slender, nonchalant man who regarded the now rapidly approaching vessel astern from his place of vantage on the fantail.

"Starboard your helm; bring her round!" Bush's words were low but clear, and the men at the carronades heard him as distinctly as the steersman whom he addressed. The pace abruptly slackened as the *Lucy* yawed, rolling in great lurches in the troughs of the seas. Around the guns the men clustered, silently watching the towering spread of sail that was rapidly bearing down on them. They were a mere handful at best to meet such an adversary, but the broad backs and muscular arms promised at least a lively action if the engagement came to hand-to-hand quarters.

"Aim for her spars!" Bush shouted through his trumpet. Slowly the *Lucy* rolled in the grasp of a great wave, higher and higher, her trucks sweeping a wide arc against the sky. For a second she steadied and then began slowly to roll back to starboard.

"Fire!"

There was an almost simultaneous roar from the

carronades and the crash of carriages recoiling against the breechings. A dense smoke poured over the decks and then shredded away like fog to larboard. A tense second passed, then a yell of exultation burst from the men. Slowly, it seemed, the tall foretopmast of the corvette bent forward and borne by the great white courses collapsed, sails streaming in the water over the bows. But even while this was happening the corvette swung sharply to starboard and her long pierced side came into view.

"Up with your helm there," Bush roared, "put her into the wind!" Slowly the *Lucy's* bow swung to the rudder's urge, but it was too late. From the high dripping side of the corvette a sheet of flame flashed and a few seconds later a hail of metal screamed across the *Lucy's* decks. From the bulwarks slivers of white oak rattled on the planks and the crash of splintering wood below told Bush that his ship had been hulled, perhaps badly. By rare fortune the rigging was practically uninjured but a few ragged rents in the now filling sails gave suggestion of the closeness of the escape. She was running full before the wind again, and the water was flooding past in a churn from her pressing bows. Bush regarded the corvette. She was helpless as far as pursuit was to be feared. Once more the black ports of her larboard battery belched their smoke clouds, but either the distance had

widened or the roll of the corvette had been miscalculated, for the shot fell far astern in an irregular line of feathery jets of water.

Bush looked forward along the deck. The guns were in and the men were ramming home the wadding. The white planking was black with trails of powder and cluttered with rammers, gun-swabs, sponges, and powder buckets. In the waist beside one of the carronades a limp figure was flung against the deck and with each pitch of the ship little dark rivulets ran from beneath it, filling the grooves of the gun slide and trickling off into the scupper. Across another gun forward three more bodies were doubled limp and lifeless.

The light was fading rapidly and the corvette now far astern gleamed white in the level rays of the setting sun. His face and body black with powder, Huggett came aft to where Bush was standing beside the wheel.

"Luther and three of the hands are killed, sir," he commented in a dry, even voice, "and Mogridge has a cut in the shoulder; a flying splinter, looks like." He studied the corvette in the offing. "I guess we can slip her before they can rig new spars, eh?"

Bush nodded. "The night will save us," he answered; "when it shuts in we can run to southward and take our course again at dawn."

They stood silent regarding the narrow deck and

the swelling canvas. With slow precision the sun flattened against the horizon and sank behind it. A white star pierced the evening sky with a gleam of light.

"Serve the men grog, Mr. Huggett. If anything happens, inform me instantly. I am going below to inspect the hull. We were struck. Did you feel them?"

He did not await the answer, but pushed back the hatch cover and slowly disappeared down the ladder to his cabin. From the darkness of the companion-way Huggett heard Bush again speaking. "Mr. Huggett," he called, "have the carpenter sound the wells."

The wind had fallen slightly with the night's coming, and now the *Lucy* swung more steadily ahead, a dim gray bird soaring across a sea of blackness toward the still glowing west. From the deck came the sound of washing down, the clatter of gun gear, and the occasional fragment of some brief conversation. No lights were visible, but the starlight brightened the planking and cast heavy shadows of blackness that moved ceaselessly with the movement of the brig.

The carpenter came aft hurriedly, his dull face twitching. "There's four feet in the forward well, Mr. Huggett, and five aft. She's takin' water bad." He spat over the side and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

A light in Bush's cabin glowed up through the open hatch. As the two men stood silent, considering this new predicament, the captain's feet sounded on the ladder steps. He was back from his inspection ; he would bring more information.

"Carpenter," he called, as his body loomed up from the hatchway.

"Ay, sir."

"And you, Mr. Huggett, lively now. There's bad business here. She's hulled in two places forward, betwixt wind and water. See what you can do with a plug, Johnson. Mr. Huggett, have the pumps manned instantly. How are the wells?"

Huggett repeated the carpenter's message. The two men regarded each other for a few moments ; neither spoke. Then Bush broke the silence.

"The water's pouring in forward. It isn't the shot hole that's bad. Three planks are splintered." He held up his arms and wrung the water from the wide cuffs of his coat. "If we can't stop them, it will look bad by morning, Mr. Huggett." His eyes swept the dark horizon to the east. "We've lost her, anyway ; for the time being at least."

The mate moved forward without comment, and Bush heard his voice ordering the pumps to be rigged and manned and buckets slung through the hatchways. In the light of the binnacle the bearded face of the steersman peered between the wheel

spokes. He was whistling quietly in his teeth. Bush watched him and found himself wondering if he could count on the man's loyalty. He was a friend of Mogridge, and Bush realized that the knowledge of that friendship prejudiced him against him. Mogridge he distrusted. He would get rid of him at the end of the voyage. He walked to the rail abreast the skylight and caught an arm around a backstay. The sky was paling in the east before the rising moon. He ran his hand along the rail; it was dry and still warm from the afternoon sunshine. Under the rail there was a seething sound of water that seemed to move aft and fade away beneath the stern. Now and then as the *Lucy's* bow settled after rising on some long, black swell, there was a noise of breaking water and a white churn of foam roared under the side, glinting in the starlight. Under the counter the wake was gleaming with the green fire of phosphorescence.

It is not strange that a medley of thoughts occupied the brain of John Bush on this peaceful tropic night. Beneath his feet a sinking ship was swinging swiftly on through the stillness and the moonlight. Around him were men, many of whom he could rely upon, but of their number were those whose loyalty he questioned. Far astern was the corvette, now no longer a menace, but the thought of her recalled the limp, mangled bodies behind the splintered bulwark; good men they were, whose

devotion to him had never wavered. Far behind was Le Cap, and in that ruined city were men and a woman who had already bent and diverted the whole direction of his normal life. Yes, that was the answer! It was she, that slim, dark-haired girl with the anguish in her brown eyes who unconsciously was the cause of all these mad adventures. What could the future hold? He watched the creamy foam swirl past the *Lucy's* smooth side. If the ship could be kept afloat they might make the Mole, or perhaps Tortuga would be safer. And then? Death had been almost miraculously avoided at Le Cap; death awaited his return. Again the hunted look in the deep brown eyes pleaded with him. Death? Yes, death threatened, but blind, unreasoning love called to him. "Within two weeks," he said slowly to himself, "I shall return to Le Cap!"

From the shadow of the deck came the regular clanking of the pumps. The lee ports had been opened and through the forward hatch the men were lifting buckets of water from the hold. He could hear the splash of each bucketful and occasionally the slow monotonous sing-song of the workers. Clank—clank, clank—clank——

The carpenter appeared from the shadows and stood in front of him in the moonlight, the water dripping from his clothing and making dark puddles about his bare feet.

"We've plugged one hole, sir"—he spoke slowly as though winded by his recent exertion—"but t'other one forward is under water; it's the worst one. She's sprung and it can't be handled afloat. The water's gaining fast!"

"The pumps?" Bush queried.

Huggett had joined them and supplied the answer. "The water's coming in twice as fast as we can pump and bail. It's looking desperate, Captain."

"How long do you think she will float?"

The mate pondered for a moment. "Perhaps six hours, perhaps longer. But there's not enough able men to last beyond that. There's two wounded men and Mogridge. We're short-handed, anyway."

"Serve double grog and make the longboat ready. I shall set the course for Tortuga. The longer we can keep afloat, the nearer we shall be when the time comes to leave her." The mate and the carpenter went forward and Bush leaned against the rail, conscious of an infinite weariness. So six hours was all that was left for him? And then an open boat! He thought again of Le Cap. In two weeks he would return. He smiled bitterly. Probably they would be picked up by an English ship, defenceless, helpless. Even if they reached the land, the *Lucy* would be gone. And then, already he began to scheme how he might travel from their

landing place across San Domingo to Le Cap, on foot and alone. Whatever might be the obstacles, the determination of John Bush did not waver. Come what might, he was determined to accomplish the rescue that he proposed.

It was four o'clock in the morning when Bush gave the order to bring the ship about and to lower the longboat. For the past three hours the brig had laboured heavily and had settled gradually until her bow now sunk deep into every swell. So laboured was her headway that she seemed scarcely to feel the light air that blew steadily out of the east. She was water-logged, a heavy, torpid thing, and in a few hours even this sluggish movement would cease and she would disappear in the deep, black water that heaved so peacefully in the moonlight.

Except for the creaking of the blocks as the men lowered away on the falls, there was scarcely a sound. Silently they passed down into the longboat, that now swam almost invisible in the shadow of the brig, the necessities that the next few days would require ; food and water, guns and cutlasses, powder, a compass, sails, spars, and other gear. Carefully the two wounded men were lowered to a place amidships, and a minute later Mogridge was assisted over the side, his left arm bound to his body with some strips of bloody canvas. In a small chest Bush had packed those few articles that he felt he would require, and with an almost over-

whelming emotion he turned finally to the companion-way and gave a last glance at the cheerful cabin gleaming in the candlelight.

The longboat pulled out from the shadow of the ship into the moonlight, rising smoothly over the now perceptible swells, the oars splashing faintly and scattering from their blades showers of drops that glittered in the light. Like a black spectre the *Lucy* rode low in the water, her sails slack and lifeless, her decks deserted; only the yellow glow through her stern ports suggested how recent was her abandonment, the light of the candles that Bush had failed to extinguish.

At a safe distance from the sinking ship the men rested on their oars. No one spoke. The tragedy that was being enacted before their eyes cast a depression over them, a depression that heightened when their thoughts turned to the uncertainties of the immediate future. The air was damp and Bush drew his cloak about his throat. With eyes tired with the strain of the past twenty-four hours he watched, as though in a dream, the ship that represented all the material fortune that life had given to him. And yet it was not the thought of this abrupt turn of fate that distressed him; it was rather the realization that by the loss of the *Lucy* his return to Le Cap had become difficult, if not impossible. Vainly he tried to construct a plan that seemed feasible, but no solution offered. To reach land at

all, without capture or disaster, was a sufficient problem.

High in the purple night sky the moon flooded the black and gently heaving sea with radiance. There was little wind, and the *Lucy,* a gray ghost, slowly rose and fell, her sails slatting silently and now and then a block creaking audibly. Huddled low in the longboat, the men watched the brig. There were thirteen of them all told ; Bush, Huggett, and Mogridge, ten seamen, of whom one was the cook and two others who were so cruelly wounded that it was doubtful if they could endure for another day. Seven able hands, in other words, in addition to the two mates and the captain. From the stern-sheets Bush regarded them and pondered the problem that faced him.

"She's going by the head," said a voice.

Bush turned his eyes toward the *Lucy*. There was a rustling and shuffling noise in the boat as the men aroused themselves to watch the final plunge of the brig. Already the *Lucy* was awash forward, her striker buried in the sea, the water almost to her hawsepipes. A muffled crash came from her decks—a hatch burst open by the air pressure beneath. Steadily her head settled until the rudder was lifted clear of the sea and the water glistened beneath her keel. Then, at first almost imperceptibly, she seemed to drive forward ; faster and faster came the movement ; higher and higher the

stern lifted. There was a second dull rumble of a bursting bulkhead, and then smoothly and silently the brig slid bow foremost beneath the surface and was gone. A minute later a little wave rocked the longboat. The ocean was deserted; unbroken the horizon swept its complete circle under the fading night sky.

In a low voice Bush spoke to the men who, still fascinated, were watching the spot where the brig had disappeared. "To the best of my knowledge," he said, "we are about a hundred miles north of Tortuga. Caicos Island is near us on the north, and there are other islands at hand, but there we should not be certain of water; for the most part they are not inhabited; we should run small chance of rescue. It is best to head for Tortuga." He paused for a moment to let them consider what he had said. "We have food and water for a week, at least, but it may be longer before we reach land, as the wind may be against us. Meanwhile, we shall be in dangerous waters. There is a chance, of course, that an American ship may sight us, but for every such chance there are five chances that we be sighted by an Englishman. As you all know, these waters swarm with them." Again he paused, and once more he continued, but now in a slightly higher and firmer voice. "You will remember, men, that you will continue to look to me and to Mr. Huggett

and Mr. Mogridge for your orders with the same obedience that I have required of you in the past. I will have no complaining ; our safety lies in your obedience.''

From a pile of boat sails in the bottom of the boat, one of the wounded men cried out suddenly in a delirium of pain. Bush felt his way through the darkness and kneeled beside the twisting body. His strong, cool fingers brushed the matted hair from the boy's hot, wet forehead. With almost womanly gentleness, he slipped an arm beneath the slender shoulders and steadied the head against his breast. The right arm was gone, carried away by a round shot, and the stump had been crudely stopped with a rope tourniquet.

''Water, for Christ's sake, water!'' the boy's voice quivered with pain. A few feet away a man was already filling a can from the nearest beaker. Bush felt the body in his arms tremble, the lips straightened spasmodically, and a gurgling sound like inarticulate words came deep from the throat.

Gently he let the body sink to the pile of sails. ''Never mind the water,'' he said in a quiet voice.

What little breeze there was came from the south, a faint, elusive air cool with the dampness of the night sea. At the order, the men put out their oars and Bush headed the boat into the wind. With even cadence the steady sound of the tholepins mingled

with the occasional splash of a dipping blade and the constant gurgle of the water past the low bow. That was all. There was no other sound. Four men, bent, black figures, manned the oars; the others slept. In the stern-sheets Bush watched them, and now and again scanned the empty horizon. In the cloudless sky a planet burned with white flame, stars in myriads whitened the deep vault of blue except where the moon with her radiance eclipsed their lesser light. The hours passed. Then the east began to pale; day was at hand.

In the early morning following that night on which John Bush had so hurriedly put to sea, Virginie Goutier awakened from her quiet sleep with a presentiment of evil. Cheerful sunshine flooded the room and shone like a golden haze through the white gauze curtains of her bed. The air was still, but little familiar household sounds came faintly to her ears. Peace seemed to brood over the roof of Leroy Mangan.

Then to her awakened brain came sharp as dagger thrusts two terrifying thoughts—would Pierre Nicholas attempt to consummate the wedding which her guardian had sanctioned before she could effect escape, and had some misfortune fallen upon John Bush in whom she recognized her only possible deliverer? Almost a week had gone

by since that evening when Bush had been requested by Leroy Mangan to leave his house. What could be the significance of this silence? Had the aroused antagonism of her guardian followed the young American beyond the gate? She knew only too well how cheap was death and how silently it could appear in the San Domingo City. She flung her face against the pillow, dry-eyed in the terror of her thoughts.

To Virginie Goutier the Philadelphia captain had come clothed in all the romance of her dreams. Never had she forgotten his stalwart figure and smiling face since the first day that they had met. In the months that intervened she had built around his memory the attributes of all the lovers of history. In the secluded garden of her life he had become her constant companion; he was the embodiment of all that earth held of bravery and gentleness and passion. He was the antithesis of Nicholas. And blindly and unreasoning she trusted that some day he would return to her.

He had come. In the hour of her greatest need he had again stepped into her life, and although so few words had passed between them she knew that her love had struck a fire in his heart. Leroy Mangan had sensed it; that was why he had turned against Bush and ordered him from his door.

But long days had gone by since that night, and

still no word from him. Either something had happened to him or he secretly planned some daring move for her rescue. To relieve her anxiety she played with the latter thought, but through the fascinating romance which her fancy wove came again and again the prodding fear. Life was so cheap in Le Cap.

She breakfasted early and alone. It was customary for Leroy Mangan to drink his chocolate in bed and to arise late in the morning. In obedience to her order her carriage was waiting before the door. She gave the coachman her instructions and leaned back among the cushions. It was the first time she had left the grounds in many days. Her dreams filled her life. In the stables her saddle-horse was growing fat and restive.

The horses came to a stop before the warehouse of Monsieur Samatan. From the steps she could see all of the harbour, and her heart seemed to rise in her throat as she realized that no vessel rode to anchor on the smooth water or rested against the wharves. Somewhere and for some reason the brig of John Bush was gone.

Napoleon Samatan greeted her with a profound courtesy which gave no indication of the surprise which her early morning call occasioned. Gallantly he bowed her to a chair and flung back the shutters of a window that the breeze might cool the room.

"Monsieur Samatan," she began abruptly, "ever since I was a little girl you have been very kind to me. You knew my father and my mother. Can I trust you with my confidence?"

"Mademoiselle, it would be my greatest happiness to serve you."

She looked intently at the dark level eyes of the merchant and their honest and friendly gaze confirmed her confidence.

"Captain Bush; he, too, is your friend?" she continued.

"*Oui,* mademoiselle; there is no man whom I regard with deeper affection."

"What has happened to him?" She leaned forward, her long fingers laced upon her knees, her deep eyes imploring.

Monsieur Samatan made an expressive gesture of despair with his hands. "It is a strange story, mademoiselle; he has left Le Cap; quickly; for his safety. But I shall tell you." Then with dramatic interpretation he recounted the story, as he had heard it, of Bush's encounter with Pierre Nicholas, and of his escape from the harbour on the evening previous. When he had finished, Virginie got up from the chair and laid her hands in his as he stood before her.

"Monsieur Samatan, he will return. For my sake he has done these things. You alone know of

this. My secret is in your keeping. As his friend and as the friend of my parents, I appeal to you to aid us if the need arises!"

Monsieur Samatan was deeply affected. "I will promise that," he said simply.

FROM a sky of intense blue the sun for five hours had burned down on the open boat with the heat of a furnace. The calm still held, only a gentle undulating swell broke the even surface of the sea. Even the water seemed to radiate the stupefying heat.

Just at dawn the men had taken in their oars, and as the boat rocked gently they had slipped over the side the lifeless body of the boy who had died during the night. In the bow under a rude shelter of a sail the other wounded man lay unconscious since the hour when from the sinking deck of the *Lucy* his comrades had lowered him into the boat. Bush had examined him and had tried with that rude skill which years of actual experience had given him to draw together the gaping wound in the broad chest. But the flying splinters of oak had cut wide and deep, and an hour after the sun had lifted above the horizon Huggett from his place beside the dying man had raised his hand and in a hushed voice called to the captain that death had claimed its second victim.

Throughout these long hours Mogridge had sat crouched on a thwart, his injured arm carefully

suspended in a rude sling. It was not surprising, considering the complaining disposition of the man, that he assiduously nursed his injury and that he resented with ill-concealed displeasure the unconcern which his wound occasioned. Mogridge was not popular with the men, but the effect of the constant criticism and complaining of a man of his disposition cannot be ignored, and the second mate was always certain of an audience whenever he felt inclined to comment unfavourably on the ship, the ship's stores, or her unconcerned captain. Now he was recounting in a low voice certain incidents of the recent engagement which had escaped the attention of the others, but which, according to his recital, contributed materially to his self-admitted gallantry. His office of second mate gave him a reluctant hearing and undoubtedly protected him from the heckling that such boasting in the mouth of one of the seamen would have brought forth from his fellows. With elaborate care he made his way to the stern-sheets and with a servile deference crouched down on a thwart in front of the captain.

"Will ye be so kind, sir," he queried, "as to look at this arm again? The pain is very bad now. I'm giddy-like. Perhaps a tot of rum would ease it off a bit."

Bush made no answer, but pulled the blood-

blackened bandage from the man's arm and regarded the bruised and lacerated shoulder.

"Mr. Mogridge"—he spoke very slowly and loud enough for all to hear—"two men have died quietly and without complaint. These are but scratches and bruises on your shoulder. I shall expect a manly silence from you who are fortunate to be alive. The rum"—he glanced through half-closed eyelids at the men—"I shall give out to the workers."

He would have said more, for his temper was frayed with interminable hours of exertion and excitement, but he realized that he must not give way to an impulse however justifiable, and that the complete and willing co-operation of all was necessary if they were to save themselves from this predicament. At noon a ration of salt meat and hard bread was passed from hand to hand from the chests secured in the stern and for each man a pint of water flavoured with clarine, or crude San Dominican rum.

The breeze still held from the south, and all through the long, hot day, with the exception of two hours at noon when the sun burned down on the open boat with a withering heat, the men pulled steadily at their oars. Evening came and another night hastened fast on the abrupt sunset. Dew gleamed on the thwarts and a chill dampness per-

meated the air. The men had worked well, and even Mogridge had relapsed into a silence that although moody was by far preferable to his customary grumbling and complaining. For a few hours beginning with midnight the breeze shifted slightly to the north-east and the mast was stepped and a sail bent to catch the light air. But with the dawn it died entirely and the men again resumed their shifts at the oars.

Ever since the *Lucy* had been abandoned, Bush had kept a sharp watch on the horizon. Although a sail might mean a desirable rescue, he was aware that the chances were slight that it might be an American or a neutral vessel, and anything was preferable to capture by an Englishman—merchant ship or man-of-war. There were a large number of Yankee privateers at sea, however, and if one of these should chance upon the open boat nothing could be more fortunate, for such a rescue would insure their ultimate landing at an American port, or, for that matter, at a neutral port, from whence he could more readily carry out his plans for a return to Le Cap.

It was accordingly with no small emotion that shortly before noon on the second day the topsails of a small brig were sighted on the horizon, apparently holding a course that within a few hours would bring her within hail of the open boat. For a long time Bush had been planning a course of

action, but he had not yet disclosed his plans to Huggett or the crew. Now, however, he determined to sound their inclinations, for the scheme which his active imagination had engendered required the implicit support of all.

"If yon brig is of our people," he explained while the rowers trailed their oars and the others sat with bearded faces turned to him, "all is well. But I doubt greatly if a small trading brig, for such she appears to be, would be in these waters unless she is English or of another country. You will remember how much alone the *Lucy* has been these years of the war. If we are taken up by an English ship, the consequences are well known to you. Escape is impossible. But there is an alternative, which, if you're the breed of men that I believe you to be, can be attempted. Are you of a mind to follow me?"

A lank sailor with sun-bleached hair broke the moment of silence that ensued. "Ay, Captain, we're with ye. But what may be the plan?" The others nodded in assent.

"There are now eleven of us in all," Bush continued. "We have cutlasses and tomahawks and there are six pistols in the store-chest. I would have all but three hide beneath the canvas, while the others with the sail will hold a course along the wind. If we make her out to be American or a neutral, well and good, but, if English, we will

signal our distress, and if once we can get alongside of her without their suspicion that others are hid beneath the sails, there's a slim chance, but our only chance, we can take her by force."

There was silence ; then a muttering of voices as the men in an undertone discussed their captain's plan.

The carpenter finally turned to the captain. "If ye think it can be done, sir"—he spat carefully over the side and shifted a great wad of tobacco from cheek to cheek—"then we'll follow where ye lead. Better, says I, that we die on yon brig's deck than to rot in prison."

There was a murmur of approval from the men. The black face of the negro, Luke, broke into a broad smile and he wagged his head vigorously in approval.

"And if we take the brig and she proves well laden, will there be a division of the prize money?" asked Mogridge.

"There will be the usual division," Bush answered. "If she carries a valuable cargo there will be a rich reward."

Already Huggett was setting the mast and bending the small sail. In the excitement of this desperate adventure the men began hurriedly to buckle their cutlasses about their waists and to select the small hand-axes or tomahawks that were perhaps the most popular weapons for boarding in

those days when ships were laid side to side and the victory was most often won in bloody hand-encounters. From a chest at his feet Bush produced the heavy smooth-bore pistols and, with the help of Huggett and Mogridge, loaded and primed them. Carefully the extra sails were spread with apparent carelessness in the waist of the boat and as much as possible of the stores concealed beneath them, leaving sufficient space for the men who would crawl beneath as soon as the oncoming vessel could sight the longboat.

Through his spyglass Bush watched the approaching brig. Slowly her courses appeared and then the hull came up out of the sea. In the light air she was carrying all her available canvas, but in spite of this she made slow headway, the wind barely filling the sails.

Huggett took the glass and studied the brig critically. "She's a merchantman," he finally said. Bush nodded, "That's as I make her out, Mr. Huggett." "And she's English," the other continued; "no mistaking her, sir. Lads, under the tarpaulin with ye! We'll take no chances."

From their places in the stern the two men surveyed the now apparently deserted boat. The small sail that had been set forward slapped listlessly as the long blue swells passed under the keel. The pile of canvas in the waist lay tumbled as though cast there for some purpose which the two

men were unable to fulfil. Their appearance of distress was all that could be desired.

A half-hour passed and the brig was now not more than a mile away. Twice Huggett had stood in the stern and waved his shirt above his head, but there had been no apparent sign of recognition from the ship. Once again he steadied himself on spread legs and shook the torn, white garment in the air. Slowly the brig swung a point off her course, and, as the two watchers recognized this evidence that they were sighted, the red ensign was rapidly hoisted to the peak and again lowered to the deck.

Bush passed the information on to the crew. "She's English! Ten minutes, lads, and she'll be alongside. Not a sound there until I give the word, then follow me. A surprise is our only chance."

The brig headed toward them, the blue water now and then whitening beneath her bluff bow. She was heavily laden and in the light breeze laboured almost as though waterlogged. Bush had concealed his glass beneath a thwart, for now he could clearly scan her deck with his naked eye. A sailor in the bow was the only sign of life that was visible. Apparently their appearance had created no particular interest. In an undertone Huggett called attention to the gun ports pierced in the low bulwark. Peaceable as was her appear-

ance, the brig, like the *Lucy,* was evidently armed to take care of herself. Another sailor now joined the watcher in the bow. Bush waved his arm to them and one of the men lifted a coil of line above his head. So slowly was the brig moving through the water that it was evident that the sailor intended to cast a line to the longboat and bring it alongside without stopping his own progress. Huggett gave a quick look of satisfaction at the captain. To be picked up in this fashion would not necessitate the presence of officers or men on deck.

It may be questioned how a man of the integrity and courage of John Bush could propose to take by force a peaceful merchantman thus proffering a service of mercy to two castaways in a small boat in an empty sea. But it must be constantly remembered that a war of singular bitterness was then in progress between England and the United States and that the impressment of Yankee sailors by British men-of-war had played no small part among the causes of that struggle. Accordingly, in the eyes of John Bush, this slow plodding English merchantman was fair game to bag if he were able to do so by the ingenious strategy that he had determined to execute.

In another minute the high, blunt bow of the brig loomed above them. An order was bawled aft by the sailor to the steersman, the coil of rope came

singing through the air, and Huggett, catching it over his arm, made fast with a hitch around a forward thwart. Slowly the headway of the brig swung the longboat alongside. Nearer and nearer they approached. With a quick glance Bush saw that a few seconds more would bring them within reach of the main port channel, a flat ledge of oak plank projecting outboard from the brig's side for the spreading of the lower shrouds. By this means it would be easy for all to scramble quickly from the longboat to the brig's deck. The shadow of the high black side was above them. Over the bulwark three faces now peered down at them. The line was secured to the brig's bow. Should they suspect a trick and try to cast off the boat one of the crew would have to run forward. Curiosity had brought them aft. Never were circumstances more propitious.

The gunwale of the longboat touched the brig's planking, and as he felt the slight shock Bush whipped a pistol from beneath his coat and sprang for the channel, his hands grasping the chains that secured the deadeyes of the shrouds. As he leaped he gave a shout, "Now then!" but the men needed no word of action. The sails were thrust back and from the bottom of the boat they followed their captain with a rush into the chains. So sudden and so unexpected was the attack that no one of the ship's crew for a few vital seconds re-

sisted their onset. With a leap Bush cleared the bulwark and his feet struck the deck. Already Huggett was at his side. From the poop came the roar of a pistol and a bullet sang past his head. He saw the man who fired and the flash of his own pistol was the instant answer. With an oath one of the brig's crew flung himself against them, a long pike in his hands that buried its lance-like head in the chest of the last man to leave the long-boat just as his body appeared above the gun-wale. Cutlasses were clashing. Two, three, four more pistol-shots roared viciously. A man dropped at Bush's feet and rolled screaming into the scupper, his head cloven with a cutlass. Two others were crumpled on the white planking. Of the brig's crew who had been on deck but one remained, and he was climbing now for life to the maintop.

"Clap on the hatches," shouted Huggett.

Already Bush had reached the companion-way to the captain's cabin. He still carried his empty pistol and jammed its wide muzzle in the face of the red-coated officer who, sword in hand, was trying to mount the ladder and gain the deck.

"Back!" he ordered. "In the name of the United States I require your surrender!" Slowly the officer retreated, and, the pistol still covering, Bush followed.

The sunlight was shining brightly through the

cabin skylight. On the table were cards and some half-emptied wine-glasses. A chair lay overturned on the deck ; others were pushed back from the table. All these things John Bush noticed through his half-shut eyes, but of particular interest was a little group of three men who stood against the stern windows. They were all in their shirt-sleeves, but the trim small-clothes of the two who stood together on the right gave Bush the instant clue that here were two of the King's officers, a suspicion confirmed by their red coats tossed on a transom, while in the general bearing of the third, a bearded man of forty, he recognized the captain of the brig. They were leaning over a bench beneath the windows and rose upright sharply as they heard him enter the cabin, half-loaded pistols in their hands. With a push of the muzzle of his own weapon in the fat, red-cloaked stomach of the man whom he had encountered on the ladder Bush forced him abruptly into an empty chair. One of the other officers, a small, elderly man with gray powdered hair, fingered at his belt for his sword hilt, but weapons had not until the moment been considered a necessity. All were unarmed.

"My natural inclinations as a gentleman——" Bush began.

"Sir!" thundered the little gray-haired man, "what is the meaning of this intrusion?"

"Damn his eyes," interjected the brig's

captain, "this is piracy." He continued with brazen disregard to load his pistol.

"Enough!" The words were drawled, but there was a cutting edge to them that could not be disregarded. "Lay down that pistol!" There was a second of hesitation, then slowly the order was obeyed. "Gentlemen, I regret this inconvenience, but I have no alternative, although it is my pleasure to offer alternatives to you. My men hold this ship. Your resistance is useless. If I may have your word on your honour as gentlemen, I shall consider you on parole, confined, however, for the present to this cabin. If you do not care to accept, you can only face the consequences."

"Are you devils?"—the fat face in the chair at Bush's elbow was crimson with rage and mortification. "Where did you come from?" He breathed in hot gasps as he spoke. "In middle sea; honest men cut down; who in the name of the devil are you?"

Until this moment the third of the three officers had not spoken, but now he took a step forward, a pleasant smile brightening a grave, youthful face.

"I am Lieutenant Selby of the Ninth; these are my brother officers bound in this ship with me to the Jamaica station. This gentleman"—he waved a graceful hand half-concealed by a lace cuff toward

the glowering face of the captain—"is the master of this vessel on which we have the honour to be passengers. And now may I beg of you to explain the cause of disturbing sounds we have heard on deck and the somewhat unusual manner of your, may I say, intrusion?"

"Damn ye; what means this?" interpolated the apoplectic man in the chair.

"I am an American," Bush answered. "Captain of the brig *Lucy* which, having been abandoned by me and my crew two days ago, has made it necessary for me to secure another vessel. The state of war existing between our countries does not permit of the request for safe passage which I would otherwise make. Accordingly I have taken this vessel. Do you accept my terms?"

The men looked at one another; all except the captain of the brig, who stared with fixed eyes through the stern window at the blue sea and the square of flaming azure sky. Then the small man with the powdered hair slowly gathered the pistols from the bench and laid them on the table.

"There are doubtless other weapons here also; if you wish we shall discover them; take these; we have no other means of defence at hand. We give you our word to remain here and to attempt no escape or resistance until——" he paused uncertain.

"Or to communicate with any person until I personally give you my release," Bush continued.

"I accept." He glanced at his companions.

The younger man repeated the words.

"Damn ye," sputtered he in the chair. "I accept, but ye shall regret this outrage!"

Bush looked at the captain, but the dark eyes still watched the sinuous wake. "I, too, accept," he said slowly.

"Then I think all is understood. Forgive me if I take these with me. It is possible that there may be some among the crew who will not prove so reasonable." He gathered the pistols from the table and turned to the door.

With an oath the great man with the red face leaped from his chair. "Pirates," he roared, "ye dirty hounds!" He dashed his sword on the deck. "I have agreed, but I will not soil my hands. If you want that"—he pointed to the sword—"take it where it lies. I'll not hand it to ye!"

Bush felt his face flush beneath the tan. With a glance at the red face that glared at him he turned and climbed the ladder. "Pirate." The word staggered him. Was this war or piracy? To the dark-eyed girl in Le Cap he was the chivalrous Philadelphia captain of the armed brig of which he was also, in part, an owner. And now, but a few minutes before, he had scrambled barefoot over the side of an English ship and at

pistol point required these men, of whom two at least were gentlemen, to surrender themselves and their vessel to him. But his thoughts went no further, for other matters of immediate consequence demanded his attention.

There was little on deck to suggest at first glance the extraordinary events that had so recently occurred. Under full sail the brig was crowding ahead, the sun shining brightly on her white canvas, and a wisp of blue wood smoke trailing from the galley stack. Shading his eyes with one hand Bush glanced at the steersman. It was one of his own men. Forward, Huggett and two others were securing the forecastle hatch and beside the mainmast stood three of the brig's crew, their hands bound behind them, the redoubtable Mogridge covering their now helpless bodies with a huge bell-muzzle pistol. Near the port shrouds Luke was washing the deck with a bucket of water and scrubbing with one bare foot a dark stain on the white planking.

He walked across the deck to the negro. "You have put the dead men overboard?" he asked. The negro held up two long, black fingers and pointed over the side. Then his lips parted in a wide smile and he resumed rubbing at the dark spot on the planking.

With a frown on his forehead Bush called to Huggett, and it was with a sense of relief that he

saw the sturdy figure of the first mate turn and come toward him. In the long hours in the boat John Bush had sensed in the behaviour of the men an abrupt change from the character they had always previously exhibited when on board the *Lucy*. There had been no instance of insubordination nor any reluctance to obey the few orders he had found it necessary to give, but discipline had unconsciously relaxed; the sharing of a common danger under conditions of forced intimacy had created a feeling of equality that could never exist where quarterdeck and forecastle are recognized; he felt that he was considered by them more their leader than their captain.

And now these more recent events had increased the feeling of uncertainty that possessed him. Were the brig to be taken by a British man-of-war he harboured no illusion as to the fate that would await them. Pirates had the red-faced English officer termed them; as such he could expect scant consideration; and would they not be considered pirates, with plausible justification, by an enemy?

If these same thoughts were also in the minds of his men, he wondered what would be their reaction. And particularly he wondered what would be their verdict when he proposed the hazardous venture that was already taking form in his restless mind. So it was that a feeling of relief pos-

sessed him when he looked down into the ruddy face of Mr. Huggett and read there the loyalty that he so vitally required.

"The dead should not have been put overboard," Bush remarked curtly. "The burial service could have been read by one of their officers. Who ordered it?"

"Not I, sir, nor Mogridge." Huggett jerked a thumb at the negro. "He tosses over the one with the split head and Mike and Abel throws over the other one—shot through the eye he was—afore I could stop 'em."

"How about our man who was killed; who was he?"

"One of the hands, sir; Nate Dawson; fell back in the water." Then he added, "The pike went overboard with him."

During the next hour Bush inspected his new command and interviewed the prisoners. *Hercules* was her name; a brig of about the same size as the *Lucy*, but designed along the broad, bluff lines of an Indiaman rather than according to the sharp, fine mould of the little Philadelphia blockade-runner. She was English built and English manned and had sailed four weeks previous from Portsmouth for Port Royal with a mixed cargo of merchandise. The three army officers travelled as passengers and were returning to their regiment after home leave. Of the crew, Bush gathered

from the three prisoners on the deck that the *Hercules* was decidedly undermanned, four of their number having deserted in the Bermudas where the brig had called for wood and water, which left a muster of twelve men, excluding the captain and the second mate. The first mate, he learned, had died the day before the ship reached St. George from a gangrenous infection of a broken forearm. At the moment, therefore, in addition to the captain, the cook who was confined to the galley, and the three men on deck, there were five men imprisoned in the forecastle, subtracting from the total number the two who were killed at the boarding.

The armament of the *Hercules* was a matter of no small importance and Bush observed with satisfaction that five carronades comprised her main battery, in addition to two small brass cannon on the poop. Obviously no match for a privateer, she was still by no means defenceless, and for the plan which Bush now deliberated her armament was all that he required.

Having surveyed his prize and ordered the cook to prepare food for all hands and for the cabin and forecastle prisoners, Bush gathered his men about him at the break of the poop and outlined the plan of immediate action.

It was by no means an unpleasant picture. Under a sky now broken by great fleecy clouds

the *Hercules*, another cloud of well-set canvas, drove steadily under an increasing breeze. Cool and clear the wind ruffled the hair of the little group of men who stood for the greater part bareheaded in the sunlight, and played with the loose and scanty garments that half-clothed their muscular bodies. The longboat had been hoisted inboard, and from his chest Bush had recovered his shoes and the blue coat that had so well become him on that fateful evening at Le Cap. His hat was gone, but his long brown hair was again neatly tied with a bit of marlin on his neck, and from his sun-blackened face his eyes again sparkled with the interest of this new adventure. With one arm thrown across the white handrail of the starboard ladder, he regarded the men for a few seconds in silence.

"Lads"—the tone was friendly, but there was the cold edge of determination in the slight drawl—"it is my intention to land these prisoners at Tortuga. From there I shall return to Le Cap on certain business and from there sail for an American port. This ship contains goods which will fetch a handsome sum at Philadelphia or any port that may seem advisable to make. The proceeds will be divided according to the scale of prize money customary with any ship carrying letters of marque. You will guard the prisoners zealously and observe a strict obedience to my

orders. Mr. Huggett, you will take the ship until I relieve you.''

He turned and descended the ladder to the cabin. After all, there had been no sign of insubordination ; perhaps his imaginings had been groundless. They had apparently accepted his statement without question ; he had noticed no evidence of dissatisfaction. The thought relieved him. With the *Hercules* and a loyal crew he felt capable of accomplishing even the mad project that he desired.

There was an acrid smell of stale bilge in the companion-way and the cabin was close and hot from the sunshine on the deck above. The four prisoners were seated at the table on which had been placed a great platter of steaming stew, and against the wall the cook still hovered, an obsequious black shadow that seemed to try to conceal itself behind a dingy curtain when its terrified eyes caught sight of Bush in the doorway. Of the four men at the table, Lieutenant Selby alone rose as Bush entered. They had quite evidently been drinking, for four emptied bottles of Spanish wine stood among the clutter of china, and as the lieutenant saw his captor he raised a glass goblet with a slightly unsteady hand to his lips. Collapsed in an armchair the gross body of the officer who had first encountered Bush was extended apparently unconscious. But as Selby's chair scraped on the

deck the small eyes opened between puffy eyelids and purple cheeks long enough to turn a glance of rancour at the intruder and the slack lips gave out a muttered oath.

Like a nervous sparrow the small man with the powdered hair played with the food on his plate and sipped at his wine. Of the four, the captain of the brig alone maintained his complete composure, and sat, eyes straight before him, ignoring the presence of Captain Bush in his cabin.

A slop of wine fell from the swaying glass in Selby's hand and spattered on the table. "May I ask, my dear sir, the name of our captor, and if, as Major Buffington"—he swept the glass toward the recumbent figure in the armchair—"affirms, we are to be forced to walk the plank, or suffer other indignities?" An attractive smile disclosed his fine teeth and Bush smiled in answer before he spoke. Although affected by the wine he had taken, Bush recognized in Selby a man of his own calibre, and accordingly he passed off with easy tolerance the question which in the mouth of another would have drawn from him a merited reproof.

"By to-morrow," he answered, "we shall sight Tortuga, and it is my intention to land you and your crew on that island where food and shelter are to be obtained. In the meanwhile no indignity will be offered you. However you may interpret

the manner of your capture, there is no cause for alarm. It is my regret that I must confine you to this cabin, but I am glad''—and the corners of his mouth wrinkled with evident amusement—''to see that you are well provided with the means for solace.''

That night a fine wind carried the *Hercules* steadily along her course. She was sailing on long tacks to the southward and heeled perceptibly under the urge of her canvas. Once again on the deck of a vessel that he commanded, John Bush experienced the sense of confidence that so rarely, if ever, deserted him. The poop was high and surrounded by a heavy oak rail carried by white painted rungs and from its elevation he could look forward and down upon the dim deck. The sky was misted with a bank of clouds and on the horizon the lightning flickered steadily. It had become almost uncomfortably warm, and he had thrown aside his blue coat on the skylight and stood, feet spread, behind the steersman. His eyes wandered now to the deck, now to the lofty structure of the sails looking gray in the night and again to the yellow light of the binnacle. Suddenly he became conscious of several dark figures at the foot of the port ladder which led from the poop to the main deck. Low-pitched voices caught his ear, then three men quietly mounted the ladder. As they reached the top and came aft, he recognized Mog-

ridge, hat in hand, followed closely by two of the seamen.

"What will you have, Mr. Mogridge?" he asked sharply.

The man stood silent and his two companions shifted on bare feet behind him.

"You see, Captain," he began, "begging your pardon, sir, there is some of the men wot feels a natural interest in the plan you told us this afternoon." He hesitated and then continued: "We'd like to know, seein' as how us are all together, as it may be, in the prize money, wot this business is to take us back to the Cap, when a good run would land us home."

"As the captain of this ship, Mr. Mogridge, or of any other ship that circumstance may put me in command of, I fail to see why further explanation is necessary." From the corner of his eye Bush saw the half-turned head of the steersman, and the quick thought came to him that perhaps Mogridge represented a unanimous agreement on the part of the men. "That will do," he added curtly.

But Mogridge showed no indication to desert his position. "Fair enough, Captain Bush," he replied, "but with all respect to your authority, I wishes to say that there's some of us wot has no hankering to put our necks in a noose with no reason given."

"Who are those men? Step forward, lads!" The two men came reluctantly into the glow of the binnacle. "Truslow and Cate; well, have you anything to say?" There was silence. Bush felt his face flush with the rising temper that he struggled to repress. "Get below there," his voice was hard, and the men stepped back instinctively. "This talk is mutinous. Do you know that? No more of it, I say. Mr. Mogridge, you may take the wheel."

In a dispassionate voice the steersman gave the course and with the two sailors disappeared down the ladder. All the high sense of excitement that had until that moment stimulated him deserted Bush as though he had been dashed with water. With a feeling of infinite weariness he walked to the stern and leaned heavily on the broad rail. Mutiny, the word he had so sharply uttered, seemed to smoulder beneath the shadowy deck of the plunging ship; already a spark had blown aft and he had pressed it out beneath his heel. How long would it be, he wondered, before it would burst into open flame?

RISING sharply from a sea of glittering blue, the island of Tortuga flung its green shadow against the pale band of the horizon. Early in the morning the lookout in the foretop had announced the landfall to the deck, and a few minutes later Luke had roused his master from the heavy sleep in which he had sunk, wrapped in a greatcoat in an angle of the poop bulwark, to see the bearing of the now clearly visible land. His eyes were still heavy with sleep and for a moment he stood in a stupefied bewilderment, uncertain whether to believe the mad procession of dreams from which he had been awakened or to accept the reality of the day.

He had preferred to stay on deck during the night. Below decks the brig was crowded with his own men and their prisoners; the cabin contained a company which offered scant inducement to sociability. So he secured a warm coat from the captain's locker and in the lee of the bulkhead dozed, at first fitfully, on a coil of hawser. Sleep came finally, and in the hours between the midnight and the dawn he had again walked in the garden of Monsieur Mangan with Virginie's white

shoulder beside him gleaming in the moonlight. They were happy dreams, and reality came with a dull shock as he blinked his eyes in the sunlight.

Bush ate the bread and coffee that Luke brought to him on the poop deck, and by the time he had finished, the lofty mountains of Tortuga were sharply defined against the sky. The men were all on deck except the watch which had just been relieved and gone below. Forward, a guard was sitting on a bitt near the forecastle hatch, a cocked and loaded pistol across his knees; there was no other indication that the *Hercules* was not the peaceful merchantman that she had been until these so recent occurrences. It recalled sharply to his mind the incident of the night previous.

"Mister Huggett," he called. The first mate hurried aft. "Muster the prisoners on deck."

One by one they appeared from the forecastle, a sullen little group that stared boldly into the faces of their captors and slouched nonchalantly against the bulwark. Bush walked forward and faced them.

"By afternoon," he said, "we shall be off Tortuga. At that time I shall free you and place you in the longboat with the necessary arms and provisions for your sustenance. I shall instruct your captain to proceed immediately to the shore and shall suggest that you make your way to the

harbour on the south side of the island where you can obtain shelter and ultimately passage. In the meanwhile let there be no disturbance of any kind, else I shall deal differently with you."

In the cabin the three army officers were playing cards, and although it was early morning another bottle of Spanish wine graced the board. Briefly Bush repeated the information he had given to the men. "I shall permit you," he said, "to remove with you all of personal effects that are convenient for stowage in the boat. I am sorry that I cannot do more for you."

The four men at the table regarded him in silence. As was to be expected, it was the red-faced major who exploded with tempestuous anger, his fat body fairly quivering with rage.

"Ye scum!" The words almost choked him and his face grew even more red from his coughing. "So that's it, ye dirty pirate. Ye plan to dump us into an open boat to row to a desert island while ye sail away in a stolen ship." He trailed off in an incoherent string of curses.

"Stop that!" Bush thrust his face down toward the crimson countenance of the major. "One more word from you and, by God, you'll hear from me." As instantly as it had come, the look of anger was gone from his face and a smile quivered on his lips; he turned to Selby who had risen and was standing behind his chair. "I regret,

sir, that your companion's ill-humour necessitated on my part this display of impatience. I hope I may find you more lenient with me."

Without replying, Selby walked across the cabin deck and held out his hand.

"This is irregular, I know," he said, hesitating for words; "you have come aboard us in a most piratical manner, killing several of our crew and seizing our ship. That you show us no authority from your country cannot but confirm the impressions we have received, unless we are to take your word that you hold the letters of marque that you claim. Yet I for one cannot but feel that there must be more to justify your extraordinary action than can be told. I admire your spirit and your audacity, and recognizing a gentleman, I am willing, sir, to make that allowance, and I am ready to thank you for the courtesy you have shown us, and, unhappy as it may prove, thank you also for the release which you have just promised us."

The captain of the *Hercules* got up abruptly from his chair and walked to the stern port, his broad back pointedly turned toward Bush. From his seat Major Buffington growled with increased profanity at the turn affairs were taking. Nervously tracing wet rings on the table-top with the bottom of his glass, the little white-haired colonel now eyed the two young men, and now the broad

back of the captain and the red face of the major, his small white head moving in bird-like jerks on his slim neck. Uncertain which side to favour, he remained silent.

Bush held out his hand. "Perhaps, sir," he said, "I may some time the better thank you for your confidence. The flag of the country which my brig wore gave me the right to engage, and, if able, seize the ship of our enemy. That my command became of necessity a small boat did not deprive me of that right. This capture is lawful. I regret that I must deprive the captain of his ship. Yet that, too, is war. Some day we may meet again."

He bowed and with that curious grace which characterized his every movement left the cabin. Silent with their thoughts, the four men about the table heard his light footfalls on the deck above their heads.

It was late afternoon when Bush gave the order to the steersman to bring the *Hercules* into the wind. All day the breeze had steadily freshened, and at four o'clock the sudden rending of the foreroyal into a fringe of flying ribbons told Bush that he must shorten sail if he would save the old and rotten canvas. Slowly during the day the green mountains of Tortuga had risen higher and higher above the torn blue of the sea, a long rolling range that stretched away to the eastward from the lofty

rounded peak on the western end of the island. Not more than a mile of water now intervened between the brig and the shore. It was rough, but the seas were not breaking, and as they were now in the leeward of the land a boat could make the passage with safety.

"Luff," he called to the man at the wheel.

On the deck Huggett suddenly became fervid with activity. The men sprang to their places. "Back the main yard. Let go the starboard main-braces," he bawled. There was a slam of canvas and a rattle of blocks. Heeling heavily, the *Hercules* came into the wind, rising and falling on the great smooth seas with flapping sails and creaking spars.

"Lower away the longboat, Mr. Huggett."

Slowly, the falls were let go through the creaking sheaves and the stern of the heavy boat dipped in a wave that slid beneath her. The next moment she was riding alongside the brig, rising and falling on the passing seas.

From the poop Bush watched the operation and silently enumerated the various stores that were piled high in her bow and stern.

"Have you everything necessary in the boat?" he inquired. "Then muster the prisoners!"

One by one they emerged from the forecastle and stood whistling and talking in a little group at the hatchway. Each carried a small bundle of

clothing, and one, an evident man-of-war's man by the cutlass scar across his hairy cheek, staggered under an enormous sea chest that he had refused to abandon. A little apart from the sailors, the captain of the *Hercules* and the three English officers stood silently awaiting further orders.

Huggett glanced at Bush and saw him nod in answer: "Over you go, lads!" he shouted. One by one the men dropped over the side and with less alacrity the captain and the three officers followed. Alone, Lieutenant Selby turned his face to the silent man who watched them from the poop and waved a careless salute as he climbed over the bulwark.

"Cast off!" roared Huggett.

The line was let go and fell with a slap across the bow of the longboat. Riding low in the water, the boat slid slowly past the poop. Oars shot out and backed with a swirl of water beneath the blades. In the bow a sailor shook a clenched fist at the blue-coated man who watched them from the gilded stern of the brig. "Yankee swine——" the words trailed off unintelligible on the wind.

In ominous silence the men on deck saw the longboat grow small in the distance until Huggett's order to man the braces brought them to their stations. Slowly the sails filled as the *Hercules'* head fell off before the wind, and with her mast again staggering under the crowding sails she

resumed her course to the south-east, heading boldly into the broad channel between Tortuga and the island of San Domingo, her bow pointing defiantly toward Le Cap Française.

Much as he had desired to be rid of his prisoners, John Bush was conscious of a sensation of loneliness as he glanced at the boat, now no more than a dark speck against the distant shore. Quickly as the departure of the boat had been effected, an hour had been consumed in the operation, and the sun was already disappearing behind a heavy cloud-bank on the western horizon. In the fading light the sea lost its colour, the island darkened to a deep shadow against the sky, and the wind fanned his face and throat with a coldness that made him turn the high collar up about his neck. Leaving Huggett in charge, he went down to the cabin. Already Luke was at work removing the signs of recent occupancy. Empty bottles were strewn on the deck, a broken chair cluttered a corner, abandoned articles of clothing were scattered about the room.

He walked through the short passage to Lieutenant Selby's cabin. A black cocked hat lay in the bunk. Bush picked it up and started to examine it when a paper fluttered to the deck. Automatically he read the words that were written across it :

Good luck, my Yankee pirate.

There is plenty of sea-room and deep water in the broad channel between Tortuga and the island of San Domingo. On a fine night with even no more than the starlight it is a safe and easy passage, particularly if the wind is favourable. But on that night with which we are now concerned the wind shortly after ten o'clock backed round to the east and began to blow in a constantly increasing gale into the very eyes of the *Hercules*.

It was no later than eight o'clock when John Bush retired to the cabin. Huggett had the ship, and in the first mate's ability Bush felt a confidence that on this particular occasion permitted him to undress and to lie down in the captain's great berth for as much sleep as he might be able to take. He was wearied even beyond his realization, and his head had barely settled in the musty pillow before complete oblivion seized him. The tramp of feet on the deck an hour later, when the crew first shortened sail, failed to arouse him, nor did he sense the increasing pitch of the *Hercules* as she flung herself into the now cresting waves that rode in from the open sea. Through the stern windows the shimmering flare of lightning illuminated the cabin and flashed upon his upturned face. With rending crashes the thunder echoed back and forth between the sheer mountain on the south and the lower hills of Tortuga. Then came the rain, stinging like hail, pounding the deck with

triphammer blows and flooding the scuppers until they sucked and chuckled noisily with the eddying torrents. The rain ceased abruptly and hard behind it came the wind, a mad onslaught that threatened almost to bring the *Hercules* hard up and motionless in her course.

On deck the man at the wheel peered into the howling blackness, swinging on the spokes to hold the brig steady against each squall that struck her. At his side Huggett conned the ship. A second time the men had responded to the shrill trill of the boatswain's pipe, and now the *Hercules,* on short tacks, under topsails and staysails, raced madly through the water, great clouds of spume deluging her deck and the water at times spouting inboard through the lee scuppers.

Once a treacherous cross-sea caught her broad on the bow, and for a moment the *Hercules* staggered and stopped, trembling as though her keel had grounded on a hidden reef.

"All hands reef topsails." In the blackness of the sky the men again climbed the shrouds, flung flat against them by the pressure of the gale. The foretopsail halyards were let go, and with a roar the great sail bellied out like beaten metal as the yards came down into place. Swinging on the foot-ropes, the men clutched at the flying reef-points, crying and cursing as the sail shook and slapped in the wind. In the tremendous uproar

Huggett screamed his orders in the steersman's ear. Slowly the helm was put down, the reefing was accomplished, and once again the *Hercules* battered into the seas that flung against her blunt and groaning bows.

Now and again through a rift in the clouds the moon raced hurriedly across the clear, pointing as she passed a white finger on the torn water and brightening the gleaming deck and the spray-blackened topsails. In these passing moments of vision Huggett watched with satisfaction the performance of the brig, a satisfaction that increased as the now lessening gale enabled him to gain a more certain progress on each tack.

Day dawned with the splendour of a sunrise behind a wrack of torn and flying clouds. The wind had dropped to a stiff breeze and the *Hercules* under increased sail was plunging steadily forward in hour reaches through the heavy seas. With the first white light of the morning John Bush awakened and climbed hurriedly from the bunk. His first thought was of alarm, for he had cautioned Huggett to call him during the night. Half-dressed he climbed the companion-ladder. A strong, cool wind struck him in the face and freed his eyes from the last vestige of sleep. On the poop Huggett held the wheel. Forward, a couple of hands leaned against the bulwark. Huggett's face was whitened with salt and his wet clothes

still hung heavily about his square, short body. He smiled broadly as he saw the captain.

"Ain't a bad sailor fur a scow," he commented dryly. "Ran through a bit of blow last night. Slept well, did ye?"

"How are the men?"

"All hands all night," the other answered. "Turned 'em in at dawn."

"Turn in yourself; I'll take her."

From the galley the cook shambled aft, a copper pot of steaming coffee in one hand, a metal cup in the other. Bush drank the hot draught with relish. That and his long sleep had completely revived him; all his natural optimism and enthusiasm were returned. As he steadied himself against the tugging spokes, the problem of the future seemed bright in comparison with the unforeseen difficulties that had been surmounted.

Far astern Tortuga lay like a cloud on the horizon; on the right the hills of San Domingo piled sheer from the sea, their dark green sides apparently unscarred by any sign of human habitation. The air was extraordinarily transparent and the rim of the horizon stood out sharp and clear against the sky. At eight bells Bush broke out the crew and sent the men swarming aloft to shake out the topsail reefs. Huggett again on deck climbed to the foretop and with one arm circling the mast and his eyes shaded by his other

hand peered intently at the coast. From the wheel Bush watched him and saw an arm point suddenly at the spot where the receding land and water seemed to meet. A minute later he was again on deck.

"Can jest make it out," the mate commented as he crossed the poop and took his place beside the captain. "May be some other hill, but looks like Le Morne. Ought to be, anyway. Should make the bar by four o'clock."

Bush regarded the sails. "Yes," he replied, "we'll stand off until just before dark, then run in and anchor off the town. Have your English colours ready, Mr. Huggett. I do not want to be recognized. They'll take her for the British ship she is and won't bother us until morning. Then, no matter what they do."

"Ye'll be going ashore?" the mate queried.

"Yes."

"An' ye mean that we'll put to sea again at dawn?"

"Yes."

Huggett shifted his feet with evident embarrassment. "Damn it, Captain, but it's a short call you're makin' at the Cap, if you'll let me say so."

"I shall stay only long enough to fetch a passenger who will sail with us; a lady, Mr. Huggett."

"That ain't news, if I do say it," Huggett replied. He smiled broadly. "I cal'lated weren't coffee you was after." Then a serious look followed the smile. "I guess mebbe, Captain, it won't do no harm to tell me a little more about this. There's the crew to handle, sir, and if you was to get in trouble——"

"Mr. Huggett"—Bush's blue eyes were fixed on the hairy face of the first mate—"a young woman, Mademoiselle Goutier, is in great distress. I have promised to help her. As soon as we anchor, I shall go ashore and go directly to her house. It is unlikely that I shall be noticed, for it will be dark, and I shall hope to pass without suspicion. Luke will wait in the boat at the landing. If all goes well, we shall return in a few hours. Are the men in good spirits?"

Huggett nodded. "Mr. Mogridge has been talking, sir, but I think there's no harm done. Do ye want someone to go with ye?"

"No; you will stand by here. We may have to make a quick getaway. I want the brig in readiness to sail the instant I return. There was no sail in sight from aloft?"

"No, sir."

"That's well. Report to me immediately anything that may be sighted."

It is generally recognized that the best-laid plans, no matter how sound may be their broad

conception, may miscarry through some trivial and unforeseen incident impossible to anticipate. Since that hour when John Bush had seized the command of the *Hercules*, he had occupied himself constantly in formulating a plan which would provide the most reasonable assurances for success. To slip into the harbour of Le Cap in the guise of an English trader offered no difficulties, nor did his landing after nightfall on the invariably deserted dock disturb him. From the dock he could walk with a reasonable hope of immunity from molestation to the house of Monsieur Mangan. Were he stopped, he would pass himself off as an officer stretching his legs after the confinement of a long sea voyage. The explanation was plausible. To be sure, he might encounter someone who would recognize his face. That was chance the first. He dismissed it. His action under such a circumstance could not be anticipated. He would be armed. There might lie the unpleasant but necessary answer.

It has been evident that John Bush was not lacking in assurance and a confidence in his ability to accomplish his purpose, however it might be encompassed by attendant difficulties. Perhaps the success that in the past had so generally characterized his ventures was due in large measure not only to the clear analysis of a situation which his active brain invariably formulated,

but also to his blind disregard of the possibility of failure. So it was that in the present instance he failed entirely to consider the chance that Virginie Goutier might not fall instantly into the daring scheme that he had evolved. To be sure, he had every reason to believe that to her death would be preferable to the contemplated marriage with Nicholas. And yet for her to flee on a few minutes' notice to sea with a man with whom her acquaintance was little more than casual required an aptitude for instant decision which might not be expected in a woman of her gentle and untried character.

But that, too, was a question that could not be answered at the present time. It was a long chance, but the stake was high, and a few hours would spell the answer in terms of success or failure.

In the cabin Luke was busy with a bucket of sea-water and a swab cleaning the deck and the paintwork. Bush had selected the cabin of Lieutenant Selby as the most comfortable for the reception of Virginie, and under the rough but thorough cleansing of the mute it already presented a clean and inviting appearance. In a locker Bush had discovered a supply of fresh linen as well as a variety of French china and glassware which he immediately commissioned into service. Although far inferior to the cabin of the *Lucy,* the

effect was not uninviting, and in his imagination he already saw Virginie moving about the narrow room, completing by her presence the picture that his mind sought to create.

It was an hour before he returned to the deck, but now through the glass he could see the outline of Le Morne, a tiny dot on the horizon. The *Hercules* was heading up more directly into the wind and each long slanting tack brought the mountains above the horizon. Far off on the northeast the topsails of a full-rigged ship stood sharply above the rugged line of the ocean, but she was clearly standing on an easterly course and her presence seemed to afford no real cause for immediate concern.

At about mid-afternoon Bush called Huggett to the poop and led him aft to the stern rail where they could converse out of hearing of the steersman. The *Hercules* was sailing with considerable movement and the stern rose and fell in long upward rushes and abrupt descents that caused them to steady their balance with a firm hold on the rail. Beneath the counter the wake churned out in a wide path of pale green and soapy white water, a long trail that extended in sinuous curves far behind them in the ultramarine of the heaving sea. The air was strong and cool, heavy with its burden of moisture and ocean fragrance.

Briefly Bush again outlined his plan to Huggett,

who listened with tacit acceptance, but in his rugged face and honest eyes Bush saw a disapproval of the proposed venture. He was tempted for a time to argue, but he realized that the mate's convictions were seldom open to compromise and the alternative of his own retraction quite naturally could not occur to him.

"You will instruct the men, Mr. Huggett"—and for the first time there was tinge of emotion in his voice—"to shot the carronades and these small ones"—he kicked the carriage of one of the two brass guns that swept the stern as he spoke—"with grape. Have three charges of powder on deck and break out the magazine. Also serve out cutlasses to all hands and have pikes and axes ready to repel boarders. I want this done before we cross the bar. You will wait for me until noon to-morrow. At that time, if I do not return, you will sail immediately for Philadelphia, where you will report the ship and her cargo to my uncle, Mr. Gildersleave. In the desk in my cabin you will find the necessary papers to authorize your command. Serve a double grog to all hands before we enter. I shall rely on you to see that the men conduct themselves properly."

The first mate regarded the sail over the horizon and then the now prominent landfall of Le Morne, but his thoughts were quite evidently not concerned with either.

"Have you anything you wish to say?" Bush concluded.

Huggett hitched at his belt, his usual preparatory movement before speaking. "Well, sir," he finally muttered, "it's not fur me to say, but I tell ye, Captain Bush, this is bad business. I've seen good heads turned afore by a pretty face. The devils they be, and the innocenter they be, the worse they be. It's yourself I'm thinking of, Captain Bush. There's gals in every port; fine gals and yours for the choosing. Ye asked me for my say; I've said it." He spat over the stern with the emphasis of a period to his words. It was a long speech for Thomas Huggett, the longest that Bush had ever heard him make.

"Mr. Huggett, I thank you for what you've said," he finally answered. "Your words bespeak your loyalty. As for what I purpose, that I shall carry out as I have described to you. You can show your loyalty by carrying out my orders to the letter."

"That I'll do, Captain."

The brief talk was ended. Huggett moved slowly down the poop, and Bush saw his black varnished straw hat finally disappear as he descended the ladder to the main deck.

The afternoon was wearing to a glorious close. High around the horizon the great creamy cumulus clouds piled one upon another up to the blue vault

above. Beneath them was the sea, a moving, living surface of deepest blue. And on the right lay the high shores of San Domingo, bright green in the mellow light. Already the western clouds were flaming with unbelievable colour. Sunset was but a short time away.

On a north-east tack the *Hercules* was smashing steadily through the blue water. Ahead and to the right, not ten miles away, the solitary peak of Le Morne rose above the shore. Its western slope was brilliant with the sunlight, but Bush knew that Le Cap, which rested at the base of the eastern slope, was already in shadow. There the coast-line indented sharply and formed the harbour, a good anchorage except when a north-east gale swept in across the bar.

Already the men had cleared the tarpaulins from the guns and had shotted them in accordance with the orders that Huggett had given to them. Both bow anchors were also freed from their lashings. Everywhere about the brig there was an appearance of readiness for the unknown emergency. The men wore an air of expectancy ; they were all on deck, moving about restlessly and gathering every few minutes in little groups to talk in an undertone and then to move on again in restless inactivity.

Le Morne was now on the starboard beam and Bush scanned the harbour through his spyglass. In the round lens he could see a few small schooners

tossing at their anchors. That was all. The coast was clear. He recalled the sail that had been sighted to seaward and with the glass swept the horizon. It was gone. At least there could be no interruption by another ship.

Steadily the Le Morne slid behind them as the *Hercules* beat to sea. A half-hour passed. Le Morne was now far astern. It was time to come about and run straight for the bar.

"Michael!"

"Ay, sir." The man at the wheel turned his head to catch the captain's voice.

"Stand ready to come about." He picked up the voice trumpet from the skylight. "Mr. Huggett," he shouted, "bring her about. Lively, lads." Then in a lower voice to the steersman, "Steer for the white tower in the left end of the town. That will carry us over the bar."

There was a roar of canvas, a slapping of rope and the hoarse cries of the men. A cross-sea, caught by the turning bow, flung its cloud of spray across the deck. Slowly the *Hercules* came over, and as the breeze felt her canvas she heeled sharply to starboard and seemed to fling herself forward, her bowsprit pointing to the town, now clearly discernible, as though eager to reach her destination.

The sun was low as she crossed the bar, its slanting rays striking for a brief minute the red

flag of England that whipped out straight from the halyards at the peak. In a final conflagration the sun dipped beyond the horizon. In the east the smooth white clouds glowed pink in the reflected light. Then the day ended. Two miles away a few lights already gleamed like fireflies among the trees of Le Cap. With shortened sail the brig drove now steadily but more slowly toward her mooring-place. There was a warm fragrant smell of land in the air. A mile off shore the *Hercules* came about and with topsails aback ran slowly until the splash of the anchor told Bush that the next chapter in his adventurous career was at hand.

As soon as he had assured himself that the brig was in readiness to sail on a moment's notice, Bush went down to his cabin. On the table Luke had placed bread and meat and a bottle of brandy. He ate quickly and sparingly and washed down the dry crumbs with a gulp of the smarting liquor. He dressed carefully, and with a quizzical smile on his lips surveyed in the small mirror the fit of his coat and the effect of the black military hat he had taken from Lieutenant Selby's cabin. The result was satisfactory. From his chest he took out a flat leather case and opened the cover. A pair of finely chased duelling pistols lay gleaming against the leather. Carefully he loaded and primed them and secured them in his belt beneath the fold of the greatcoat. Next from the locker of the former

captain of the *Hercules* he provided himself with a slim dagger that he had noticed there when he had rummaged the cabin the day previous.

"To-morrow morning," he muttered to himself, "we shall be again at sea—we!" He spoke the word slowly. Then he added with a reservation that might have indicated to him his realization of the seriousness of the enterprise on which he was embarking: "If all goes well."

With a parting glance at his face now shaded by the hat of Lieutenant Selby, he climbed the companion-ladder to the deck.

As he came on deck Bush glanced at the sky. Overhead the stars were shining, but the east was banked with clouds. The moon would not rise until late, and if the clouds remained it would be later still before it climbed into the clear. The darkness would prove a friendly aid. A number of the men were loafing about the deck, and he felt their eyes fixed on him. Somehow their unabashed gaze gave him an unaccustomed sensation of self-consciousness and embarrassment. A lantern had been swung near the gangway and he saw Huggett's face stolid in the light and behind him the black features of the mute, his eyes white and staring against his ebon face.

"You have my orders, Mr. Huggett," he said simply.

"Ay, sir," the mate answered.

That was all. Against the ship's side he heard the water lapping in the darkness as he climbed down the ladder. The boat bobbed and swung beneath him as his foot felt for a thwart. Then Huggett held the lantern out over the bulwark and the dim light intensified the opacity of the water and magnified the side of the brig beyond all proportion. Someone cast off the painter and it fell with a light sound in the boat.

Away from the shadow of the brig the darkness brightened. There ahead was the black mass of Le Morne ; there, beneath it, were pricks of light, lights in the Hôtel de la République, perhaps, and astern lay the brig, a floating shadow on the water. Bush had planned to land at a small wharf north of the main landing-stage, a rough, unfrequented structure used chiefly by the native fishermen. Already he could feel the warm breath of the heated land in his face, and in the stillness faint indefinable sounds crept out over the water.

" Luke, you will wait here until it is light. Then, if I do not come, go back to the ship."

The small waves slapped and chucked among the piles of the wharf and a fishy smell impregnated the damp air. Quietly Bush swung himself up to the top of the wharf. Beneath it already Luke was tying the small boat. Unconcerned, Bush realized, the negro would sleep there unseen until dawn.

Alertly he glanced about him. The little wharf

was deserted, as was also the narrow beach on either side of it. Behind the beach was an empty field with some boats drawn up on the land, and a net reel on a rude frame. Beyond, was a black row of palm-trees, and then the road. In the shelter of the boats he crossed the strip of open land and gained the trees. They were lofty coco-palms and from behind a huge bulbous bole he peered up and down the white road. It was empty. No one had seen his solitary landing.

Boldly he pushed through the undergrowth and struck out north along the road. He had come ashore north of the main part of the town; the houses here were fewer and more widely separated. Ahead on the left a high white wall rose among the palms; the ruin of a French residence. The entrance to the grounds edged the road, a lofty arch on massive pillars. Suddenly his heart began to pound violently, for in the shadow of the arch he saw the dark figure of a man. Resolutely he walked on Through the ruined gate a light shone dimly; a native hut, doubtless, in the grounds of the devastated mansion. From the corner of his eye as he passed he watched the man in the gateway. There was no movement or indication of interest. Again he felt a distinct relief; his presence on the road at least excited no comment.

For fifteen minutes Bush walked steadily. Then ahead he saw the white gateposts at the entrance to

the grounds of Monsieur Leroy Mangan. Beyond the entrance all was darkness. He had not expected to see a light, for the intervening barrier of the giant mangoes concealed the house from the road, but the silence and blackness of the place disconcerted him, and he stepped into the shelter of the trees to determine his next step. The warm, still air was fragrant almost to suffocation with the perfume of a guava-tree somewhere near by in the darkness. It was very still. As far as he could see in either direction the road was deserted.

He stepped out again, and now, walking more slowly and with conscious caution, turned into the drive, his shoes crunching noisily on the gravel. The sound of his footsteps alarmed him and he almost precipitately sought the enveloping darkness of the trees, where his feet fell noiseless on the heavy turf.

Out of the night came a sound, so clear and so near that he stopped abruptly. Someone was playing on a pianoforte ; sweet and sharp the notes sounded, a fragile overture. Then, plaintive, a woman's voice rose above the tinkling accompaniment of the instrument. It was a French love-song. Clear and distinct the words fell on his ears. It was Virginie.

The music ceased with a little limpid run along the keys. Through the bushes Bush could now see the house clearly. It was only a few yards

from him, but the windows were darkened. On the side, however, a light shone out against the trees. Noiselessly he crept around the corner. Three wide French doors opened on the lawn, and through them the yellow glow of many candles came. The whole interior of the room was visible. Then, against the wall on the right, he saw her, her dark hair coiled about the small head; her bare shoulders very white in the candlelight. She was sitting on a chair before the pianoforte with her back toward him. Unseen by her he was able to scan the room. Deliberately his eyes searched it. Each detail vividly impressed him; the dark portraits against the gray walls; the massive escritoire with panels of crotch mahogany, and leaded glass doors in the high bookcase above; the table with claw feet of brass; the gilded chairs; the vases of flowers; and the yellow tongues of the candles behind the screens of glass.

With impetuous determination he strode from the sheltering shadow across the strip of lawn and stood silent and motionless in the centre doorway. She had not heard him, for his feet had made no sound on the grass, and as he stood hesitating her fingers ran again along the keys. Fascinated, he waited, but the little run died away in silence.

"Virginie!"

He barely breathed the word, but at the sound she turned, rising from her chair with a little

startled cry that ended with a quick intake of her breath as her eyes found him.

"John!" As though to warn him from her, she held out a hand palm toward him. He ignored the gesture, and came across the floor, his steps sounding lightly on the polished boards.

"I have come," he said. "I have come as I promised. You must go with me, now, this very moment, or it may be too late!"

"Go with you?" Her great eyes sought his face. He had taken her hands in his and she was so near that he could hear her quickened breathing and see her breast rise and fall beneath the white bodice of her dress. "Go with you, now?" she repeated.

"I have a ship in the harbour; a boat is waiting. I shall take you away, where you will be safe. You trust me?" He knew he did not need the question; he could read the answer in her face, in the pressure of her fingers caught about his own. Still dazed by the shock of his coming, she regarded him, unable to grasp the reality of his presence.

"Virginie." The sound of the name on his lips brought her to herself. With a sob she released his hands and Bush felt his arms encircle the smooth white shoulders; the fragrance of her hair was in his face; her warm body clung to him. Then slowly she lifted her face. In an intoxication of emotion he bent over her; their lips met.

He felt her head sink back upon his breast ; then with a sudden movement she slipped from his arms and thrust him from her.

"*Mon Dieu,*" she breathed, "I love you ! It is you of whom I have dreamed ; that you would come ; that you would take me with you ; that I might be yours always."

His arms reached for her, but she eluded him with a half-step backwards. "And you have come," she continued. "Yes, I shall go—Oh . . ." her voice trailed off in a little cry.

From an adjoining room a footfall sounded. Then the tapestry across the door was flung back and Leroy Mangan stepped into the candlelight.

"To what, may I ask"—Monsieur Mangan spoke slowly and with cold distinctness in every word—"do I owe the honour of this visit?"

So unexpected had been Mangan's coming that he could not fail to read the startled look on Bush's face as he stared at him. With a superb effort Virginie turned toward the intruder, her chin uplifted, her eyes fearless in their level gaze. Her lips moved slightly as if she were trying to speak, but the words did not come.

Then instinctively her eyes turned to Bush. There was desperation in her glance, a combination of resolution and appeal. Imperturbable and almost casual in his manner, Bush stood beside the great mahogany table, the fingers of one hand drumming lightly on its shining surface. There were even the wrinkles of a smile about his lips. Only the blue eyes, half-shut, were hard and cold.

"Monsieur Mangan"—there was a pleasant tone in his voice—"denied by you with, I may say, scant courtesy, the privilege of calling on your ward, I have, I admit, somewhat informally come without invitation for that same purpose."

The two men stared fixedly into each other's eyes as though trying to win a mastery. "I will even say," Bush continued, "that an affair of the heart should require no explanation. I would desire, monsieur, to ask of you the hand of Mademoiselle Virginie in marriage."

A slight colour for a fleeting moment stained the white cheeks of Mangan and his eyes strayed from those of the captain to the slender girl.

"You are aware, Captain Bush," he said coldly, "that my ward is affianced to another?"

"I am." The smile withered on the captain's lips.

"And you, sir, a mere American pedlar of merchandise, presume to intrigue behind my back and tamper with the affections of this young girl whom I consider as I would were she of my own flesh and blood."

Before the eyes of John Bush the tall, white-faced man across the table appeared suddenly as though seen through a blur of flashing light. He felt the blood pounding furiously through his veins. He was trembling. A mad fury overwhelmed him. With a quick movement his hand felt for a pistol at his waist.

Perhaps it would have been well had John Bush been able to level the long bright barrel across the table and place with nice precision a pellet of lead in the heart of Leroy Mangan. Had he done so,

he would most certainly have attempted to effect an immediate escape with Virginie, and it is not unlikely that success might have been the reward. But whatever might have been the outcome had events transpired differently, these things did not occur, for as the hand of Captain Bush snatched at the pistol grip the white arms of Virginie enfolded him and he heard her entreaty from lips half-buried in his breast that he would spare the life of her guardian.

Not once during the scene had Leroy Mangan evidenced the various emotions that must have possessed him, not even when the hand of Captain Bush sought the pistol and Mangan read the desire to kill in the tense blue eyes, did the pale face change its cynical expression, nor did the fingers of the lean hand betray him by an involuntary movement. Rather, like a distinguished and slightly supercilious spectator, he regarded the drama that was acted before him.

"Come," he said finally, "these heroics, although excellent examples of the emotionalism of youth, can accomplish nothing." He walked slowly around the table toward them and instinctively the arms of John Bush tightened around the white shoulders of the girl. Mangan touched her lightly on the arm. "This cannot be, Virginie. It is late. It would be best, perhaps, for you to retire to your room. Hard words have passed.

Perhaps Captain Bush will join me in a glass of wine. Alone, we can discuss this weighty matter to some purpose."

Reluctantly the girl allowed Bush's arm to release her, and with her face half-hidden in her hands she turned toward the door. Then, unexpectedly, she lifted her head sharply and with her dark eyes filled with passionate scorn regarded the cold features of Leroy Mangan.

"Monsieur Mangan"—her voice was high-pitched but calm—"I hate you! In spite of all that you have done for me, I despise you! It is possible that you may separate us"—she gave Bush a fleeting glance—"but I shall seek death before I shall become the bride of Pierre Nicholas!"

With her head high she walked across the floor. Bush saw her arm very white against the tapestry as she drew it aside, then the hanging fell back into place. She was gone.

"And now," said Mangan, "will you be seated, monsieur? Perhaps calmly we can discuss this matter that so deeply concerns you. Cold reason is an excellent antidote for passion, and there has been to-night a preponderance of the latter." He waved his hand toward a low deep chair beside the table and drew another chair up to face it. "But before we begin to talk, if you will excuse me, I will get a bottle of Bordeaux

wine from a shipment that has been recently sent to me." He moved toward a door in the end of the room as he spoke. "It is late," he added; "my servants retire early. I will get the bottle and glasses myself."

Bush did not reply. This unexpected turn in Mangan's attitude confounded him. In the suave hospitality of the man he sensed an unpleasant reaction which he could not analyze. He distrusted him now more thoroughly than ever; the man's strange smoothness repelled him. Not less had Virginie's display of spirit taken him aback. In her hot flare of anger and in the burning indignation in her eyes he had caught a glimpse of a strong and passionate nature which, like his own, would dare all danger in the great emergency. In the next room he heard the clink of glasses and through the open door he could see the high white room. In the far side Mangan was bending over the sideboard, a huge mahogany piece on the top of which Bush's eye caught the glint of glass and silver. He thought again of Virginie, and wondered if she had gone to her room and how he could reach her if an opportunity for their escape should arise. His hand wandered beneath the coat and fastened on the hilt of the slim knife. That was one way. A quick stab; there need be no sound, and then to the boat and away before the murder was discovered. The thought shocked

him. What else could it be called but murder? Extreme as was the situation, there was no justification for that. Perhaps he could antagonize Mangan to a point where he would attack him; then the homicide would be justifiable in the light of self-defence. Again he recoiled at the thought. That was no different; after all, it would be murder. There was also a flaw in the plan. Mangan was difficult to antagonize; it was he, Bush, who doubtless would flare first. That had been the case before.

Across the room a marble clock struck twelve with sweet lingering strokes. What kept Mangan so long, he wondered? From the open door came a breeze from the garden, heavy with the scent of tropic flowers. He rose and walked to the door. The moon was out and its slanting light stole through the branches of the trees with caressing whiteness. The night was still and hot despite the breeze.

He went back and sat down again. Mangan had apparently left the dining-room, for he could no longer see him nor hear him fussing with the glasses. He examined the room in which he sat with roving eyes. On that other night he had passed through it twice without an impression; now it seemed as though he had lived in it for years. Behind him were the French doors through which he had that evening entered. The door in

the other end led to the dining-room. On his right was the entrance to the garden, and opposite it hung the piece of tapestry which concealed the doorway to the hall. As he regarded the green and brown weave, it seemed to flutter slightly as though shaken by the breeze. Instinctively he leaned forward that he might glance along the floor, to see, if possible, beneath its folds. By a few inches the hanging cleared the floor and in that scant aperture he saw in the faint candlelight a woman's foot shod in a white satin slipper. The foot withdrew noiselessly. It was Virginie.

A closing door sounded from the dining-room. Evidently Mangan had gone to some other room and had now returned. The wine—that was it; he had gone for a bottle. For what reason was Virginie hiding behind the curtain? The answer was obvious. Was not she as much as he absorbed in the mystery of Mangan's sudden affability? To her even more than to Bush the outcome of this awaited conversation was of vital import. His first inclination was to steal quietly to the door and warn her to caution, but that would probably only disclose her presence, for he now heard Mangan crossing the dining-room.

With a smile that might have been intended as an indication of pleasure, the other man laid the silver tray on the table. There were two glasses on it, fine thin glasses with fluted stems banded

with dull gold. Beside them a bottle of yellow wine reflected the light like molten sunshine and threw dancing gleams of amber on the bright surface of the tray. Both glasses were filled.

"I am glad," Mangan spoke, "that you will reasonably discuss with me the problem which your presence and your personality have created." His cold eyes rested on Bush as he talked, and, although his lips moved at the utterance of the words, the features of his face were as immobile as though cast in plaster. Only the lean right hand gave movement; the long fingers ceaselessly toying with the fluted ruffle of his stock. "Pierre Nicholas is my friend," he continued, "which I realize forbids in you a remark which could not fail to offend me. But, ah, monsieur, permit me to anticipate what you would say: that in my friend Nicholas there is a touch of colour which offends your cold, northern code. It is true. Yes; but is it not possible that we may differently regard these things here in this far country?"

Bush was silent. Notwithstanding the obvious courtesy of Mangan and the patient tone of his voice, the younger man realized that there was something which he could not fathom behind this smooth speech and manner. Was it possible that on this pretext he was being detained for some sinister fate? That could hardly be, unless during his disappearance in the other room Mangan had

summoned assistance. Even so, no charge could be brought against him.

"Monsieur Mangan," he said at length, "I am frankly puzzled by this sudden graciousness. Can it be that you, too, will discuss coolly with me that question which is uppermost in my mind? Is it that you will fairly consider the qualifications which I can offer and compare them with those of this Nicholas whose pretensions to the hand of your ward cannot be thinkable to a gentleman, the guardian of a defenceless woman?"

Mangan, who was still standing, pointed to the tray. "Perhaps, Captain Bush, you will honour me by drinking a glass of a wine, of which, I am proud to say, there is none better to be had." He lifted a glass by its stem between his strong, thin fingers. Bush rose from the chair and glanced down at the tray with his hand extended. Against the silver the yellow wine and sparkling crystal made a bright flash of colour. Then beside the base of the glass his quick eye detected a tiny fleck of powder, yellow it was, like a bit of pollen fallen from a flower. His eye caught it, but there was no reaction in his troubled brain. He lifted the glass.

As Bush's gaze rose to meet that of Mangan, his glass upheld, his eyes fell across Mangan's shoulder toward the mantled door. Slowly the tapestry parted, and in the opening he saw Vir-

ginie. Their eyes met. As he looked, she raised her hand to her lips as though to drink, then shook her head and seemed to dash from her hand an imaginary glass to the floor.

It was over in a flash, and as he looked Bush saw again the fleck of yellow powder on the tray. Here was the answer to this studied hospitality; here was the answer to Mangan's long absence from the room.

"Monsieur Mangan"—he spoke with a smile on his lips and a spontaneous gaiety that came with the realization of the danger so narrowly averted. "May I not exchange glasses with you, monsieur? I beg that you will grant so small a concession to my curious desire to drink from your glass rather than from my own?"

The speech was blunt, and there was no opportunity for Leroy Mangan to escape the significance of Bush's words.

"Captain Bush," he replied in his dry, even voice in which there was not a tremor of emotion, "I hesitate to remind you that you forget yourself. In these words of yours there is an implication that under ordinary circumstances I should hold as an insult to my hospitality, an implication that I could not pass unnoticed. Drink, sir, and let the act excuse your words."

He raised the wine to his lips, but Bush set his own glass firmly on the table. With a calmness

that matched the imperturbability of Mangan, he leaned easily against a chair-back. Their eyes met in a steady gaze. For a minute neither spoke ; then Bush ended the silence.

"Monsieur Mangan, I believe that glass of wine to be poisoned. I accuse you of the attempt to kill me. I dare you to drink the wine that you have poured for me."

"Your impudence, Captain Bush, demands more than an apology." For the first time the colour flushed Mangan's cheeks, his eyes closed to narrow slits of gray, his hand nervously fingered the ruffled neckpiece. "Drink, damn you," he snarled.

In the same measure that Mangan's former calmness had tantalized Bush into a display of passion, so now the boot was on the other foot, and the breakdown of the elder man's control established Bush the more securely in his easy defiance and irritating good-humour.

"Perhaps," he said with a pleasant smile, "if I am mistaken you would not hesitate to permit Mademoiselle Virginie to sip from the glass which I distrust?"

"Virginie is not here." The question evidently startled Monsieur Mangan and he hedged his answer.

With a quick stride Bush swung across the room. His ears caught a rustle behind the tapestry, but

he did not hesitate. The heavy hanging was brushed aside and from the darkness of the hall Virginie stepped into the candlelight. She was very pale, but her small chin was uplifted and her large eyes surveyed the room with an expression of infinite disdain. For a moment her gaze rested on Mangan and her lips parted as though she had intended to speak, but there was no sound. Then she walked to the table.

"How long have you been there?" Mangan demanded. There was anger in his voice.

She gave him a scornful look, and then, with her eyes turned from him, "Ever since you requested me to retire to my room." After a slight pause she added: "It is indeed unfortunate that there should be such disagreement between you. First I, unhappily, am the cause of your quarrel, and now a glass of wine. *Bien!* Give it to me; perhaps both causes of disagreement can be removed by so simple an act. I shall drink it gladly."

Mangan held the glass from her. His lips were twitching and there was an ugly look in the half-closed eyes. "You shall not drink it!" he cried. He turned to Bush, "Leave my house, sir, and thank your God that I have spared your life."

"Easy, easy, monsieur. An hour ago your order would have perhaps been justified. Now, however, I refuse until this little matter is settled."

Mangan laid the glass on the table and took a step toward Bush, but the latter again leaned against the chair-back, the irritating smile still bending the corners of his mouth. What Leroy Mangan purposed can never be known. That his rage had passed beyond his control was evident; that he would have struck Bush is probable. But at that moment he heard a movement behind him. Like a startled cat he flung himself toward the table. Across it stood Virginie and in her uplifted hand the glass sparkled in the light.

"So!" Again Mangan held control of himself; once more his face was expressionless. Only his eyes still showed the hate that tore him. As he turned, he instinctively made a movement as though he would try to reach the still white figure and snatch the glass from her fingers. Then an odd smile, sneering and malevolent, seared his face. Rigid with horror, John Bush stood beside him, one hand extended as though to forbid the threatened act.

"So!" Mangan continued, "you defy me. Drink, mademoiselle, be it for love or for death; I shall not restrain you."

Slowly, her eyes on the faces of the two men who stood shoulder to shoulder across the table, Virginie raised the glass. In Bush's brain there was a seething of thoughts that for the second left him powerless. He had called on Virginie with

the belief that his trick would bring the truth from Mangan. And, to be sure, the first reaction of that dramatic situation had seemed to prove his suspicion. Now Mangan was playing his own game back at him. Did Mangan believe that Virginie would not touch the glass with her red lips? Would Virginie in desperation drink the poisoned wine? Was it, after all, poisoned? Might not this all be but a chimera of his own imagining, a suspicion of his own making, by which he had played into the hands of the enemy? Then he saw the smooth, round arm, the glass, and above it the great dark eyes with that tragic appeal that he had once before fathomed in their depths. With a scream of warning he dashed around the table, his hands outstretched clutched hers. With a tinkling crash the glass shivered on the table-top.

In his arms Bush felt her body tense and cold. Her head was thrown back against his shoulder. He looked down into her face, the lips were parted, and in a whisper that sounded loud in the still room he heard her speaking.

"It was true," she spoke wearily. "From the door I saw him stir the powder in the glass. Then he brought it to you. I warned you."

Mangan was fumbling with one hand beneath the table. He pulled out the drawer and his fingers sought for something among the loose papers that filled it.

"Quick!" She gave a frightened cry and tore herself from Bush's arms. "The pistol, there!"

It was none too soon that Bush received the warning. There was no time even to reach for his own weapon. Even while Mangan still groped among the papers he was upon him. Then in Mangan's hand he saw the glint of steel. He had found it. The table shook as the two men crashed violently against it. With his left hand struggling with the right wrist of Mangan, Bush sought his adversary's throat with his right. His left hand had slipped down until he, too, held the pistol. Once he felt it pressed against his side, but he thrust it from him. Locked in their struggle, they reeled against a chair which crashed beneath them. Lithe as an animal, Mangan writhed and twisted. In Bush was the strength of youth, but in the lean body of his adversary he felt a power, the existence of which he had never dreamed; a sinuous, baffling power that equalized their strength.

Once Bush wrenched his hand upward; almost within his touch was the corded, panting throat. His fingers tore at it, but Mangan forced back his hand, clutching only at the crumpled neckpiece in its grasp. In his face he felt the hot breath of Mangan. The sweat poured from his body; with a rending sound his coat ripped from his shoulder.

Back and forth in the dim room they struggled. Mangan was now half-naked to the waist; his lean,

white body glistened in the soft light. Backward he reeled against the table. His strength was yielding. Youth, that unconquerable ally, stood at the shoulder of the younger man. Slowly the long body bent backward. Above him the face of Bush seemed as the face of an avenging angel.

There was a tremendous roar and a flame leaped from the locked hands beneath the table-rim. Acrid smoke filled the air. Mangan had fired, but still the supple body pressed down on his now yielding strength. With a twist Bush tore loose his right hand from the other's grasp; the fingers seized a leaden inkwell and raised it above the white, drawn face that was now gazing up at him from the dark gleaming mahogany. And then straight between the eyes down crashed the massive metal block. With a quiver Mangan's muscles relaxed, his arms dropped useless. Swaying unsteadily, Bush lifted himself upright. The face of Mangan was bright with scarlet blood; without a sound his limp body slid from the table to the floor.

"Virginie!"

She stood beside him. "I dared not try to aid you." She dropped to her knees beside the body which lay in the table's shadow. "He is not dead?" she cried. Her fingers sensed the heart-beat of the bare hot breast. "No, he lives!"

Bush lifted her to her feet. "Come, there is no

time to lose.'' But even as he spoke there was a sound of running feet in the hall, the tapestry parted, and a black face peered with staring white eyes into the room.

'' Back !'' Bush shouted. Bending, he snatched the empty pistol from the floor and levelled it at the door. The face disappeared and the opening closed.

'' We must go now,'' he whispered, '' while there is yet time.'' With the pistol butt he shivered the glass globe that surrounded the candles and extinguished them. Calm and white the moonlight fell in wide bars of light across the room. The body of Mangan lay in the shadow of the table, but the feet protruded into the light, two small, black-shod feet motionless as in death.

With a single thought they turned to the open door that led to the garden, but already a tiny yellow light bobbed among the trees. From the servants' quarters in the rear someone was coming with a light. Bush ran to the door through which he had entered. The moonlight bathed the dark mangoes with silver ; beneath them slept the night.

Half-supporting Virginie, he ran across the strip of silent turf. They were now in the shade of the trees, but her dress showed very white against the darkness. Hurriedly he retraced his steps around the house, leading her by the hand. Their feet

crunched sharply on the gravelled drive. Ahead, between the gateposts, was the road, bright in the moonlight. Behind them in the house a wild negro cry of terror startled the stillness; lights flashed in the darkened windows; there was a sound of excited voices.

A cluster of banana-trees leaned long, broad fronds across the road and in their shadow Bush stopped and drew the girl into his arms.

"Beloved," he whispered, "Luke waits for us. The brig is ready to put to sea." He buried his face in her hair and breathed its fragrance. "Will you go with me? Will you be mine, for ever?"

She did not answer, but he felt her head sink back; he saw her face white in the dim light; he felt the sweetness of her lips. His arms crushed her to him and her heart beat palpably against his bare breast where the coat had been torn from him. Then he felt her warm body grow suddenly limp and yielding, and he lifted his head as though in defiance of the world.

"Come, we must not linger; already perhaps they are following." He caught an arm about her waist and half-running, half-walking, they hurried down the road in the moonlight.

A strange sight they would have seemed had there been eyes to see them—a girl in a white evening gown with bare neck and shoulders, her

rich dark hair half-fallen to her waist, and at her side a man hatless and dishevelled, clad in a torn coat that disclosed a bare arm and a shoulder streaked with blood.

From the trees beyond a broken wall a dog barked sharply and ran yapping to the gate. Then far behind them Bush heard faint but clear in the silence a voice. That was all, but the sound inspired a new vigour, and he began to run. At his side he heard Virginie breathing heavily and his own breath was rasping in his throat.

The road bent slowly to the right and crossed a stone culvert. From the sea a coolness struck their heated faces. Bush had marked the place mentally ; it was half-way between the house and the waiting boat.

He stopped and listened, panting for breath. Ahead, clinking on the metalled road was the unmistakable sound of horses' hoofs. It was just beyond the turn. The sound grew suddenly loud and clear, and then two horsemen turned the corner. They were riding abreast, black figures in the night. In that rapid moment Bush had seized Virginie in his arm and turned toward the shadow of the trees along the road, but he was too late. The white dress of Virginie shone like a light in the moonshine.

"Stop, there!" a voice called in French. In the mad impulse of flight Bush continued to run

for the cover of the roadside. Again the voice called and the clatter of hoofs following told him that the horses had been spurred forward. At the edge of the road he paused. A bold front might carry off the situation.

"Who are you," he demanded in the same tongue, "that you must know the names of every man who walks in the moonlight with his sweetheart?"

The man on the horse laughed. "Come into the moonlight," he demanded. "It is late for love-making on the highway."

In the circle of his arm Bush felt Virginie trembling. Then she flung his arm from her shoulder and walked toward the horseman. "If you must know"—her voice struggled to steady itself into an even tone—"I am Virginie Goutier, the ward of Monsieur Leroy Mangan. Is it necessary that I must report myself to any man whom I meet on the highway before the door of the house of my guardian?"

There was a momentary silence. "Perhaps," said the other man who had not yet spoken, "we have been in error to have halted you, but, mademoiselle, the roads of Le Cap at this hour are at best unsafe. You would do well to return to the villa of Monsieur Mangan. You are far in your walk from the gate."

From the roadside Bush silently regarded the

two horsemen as they sat motionless in the moonlight. They were in uniform, for the cold light glittered on the epaulets and caught glints of fire from polished buttons and sword hilts. Now and then their faces lifted as they spoke, and he saw that they were men of colour, officers of the King, returning doubtless from some late celebration in the town.

"*Bien!* Let's on! Pardon, mademoiselle. Our regards to Monsieur Mangan!" He touched his horse with the spur and the animal sidled toward the roadside. "Eh, what?" There was another tone to his voice. "Monsieur, there, out into the light with you!" Stolidly Bush stood his ground. The man who had spoken reined his horse nearer. "Philipe," he called, "this fellow here, have a look at him." The two men rode nearer.

But even as they regarded Bush, puzzled by the torn coat and the signs of his recent encounter, there was a sound of running feet coming down the road, a slight sound, but clearly audible in the still night. Bush heard it, but there was no indication of his consciousness of this new danger. Escape was yet possible; a quick dash into the dark cover of the trees and then a cautious retreat to the waiting boat. If he were alone, that would be a chance at which he would not hesitate,

but he gave no consideration to the thought. With Virginie it would be impossible. There was a loaded pistol in his belt, but the two horsemen had already sensed the situation and the one whom his companion had called Philipe already covered Bush with a heavy flintlock which he had detached from his saddle.

"Run, the servants are coming." He heard her voice in his ear, but already the pursuers were in view, two dark figures coming swiftly along the moonlit road.

"It is too late," he answered. Protectingly he drew her to him, his arm about her shoulders. "Don't be afraid; there will be a way out, some way."

She clung to him. In spite of the hopelessness of the situation, there was something in his calm and quiet assurance that gave her confidence. It was perhaps that curious combination, the Quaker imperturbability and the romantic daring; the blending of cool sagacity and impassioned action.

As they approached, the two coloured servants of Leroy Mangan appeared to hesitate. Then they saw the white dress of Virginie and the uniforms of the two horsemen. In an instant a torrent of explanation burst from their lips. Mangan had been murdered; in passionate French sentences they narrated the details, and black

enough sounded the story even without the embellishments which already were added: the abduction of Virginie, and now here, the murderer, red-handed.

Bush shrugged his shoulders. "Let me speak, gentlemen"—he addressed the two officers in French—"enough of this exaggeration! I and Monsieur Mangan have disagreed and blows were given. That I would have escaped, I do not deny, nor shall I conceal the fact that I sought this lady to accompany me. There are authorities in Le Cap Française to whom I shall be taken; let us be about our business, if that is your intention."

The calm even voice was not without effect. "Virginie"—he put his other arm about her and drew her close to him—"you must return. Be brave." Then in a lower voice he whispered: "God protect you, Virginie. Be ready when I come again for you." He felt her lips against his own as her arms drew him down to her.

"Must I go back?" she questioned. "Yes; there is nothing else possible." Then with an impulsive passion she clung to him. "John, John," he heard her saying, "I love you, I love you."

As he walked down the white road to Le Cap, he glanced over his shoulder; a few yards behind

him the two horsemen loomed monstrous. There was no sound but the clink of the hoofs on the stony road and the jingle of the bridle chains.

"It is necessary," said one of the riders, "to keep your eyes to the front. And," he added, with an ugly inflection to the words, "the murderer of Monsieur Mangan need expect no quarter if he is so foolish as to attempt escape."

It was with a feeling of perplexity that John Bush awakened the following morning. For a brief period his mind groped for an explanation, for health and youth had given him a brief but dreamless slumber from which he slowly aroused himself; then in a flash the experiences of the past night were vividly recalled and he became acutely conscious of the aching shoulder where Mangan's knife had given him a glancing blow.

From a small window set in the stone wall he could see between the iron bars a patch of blue sky and through the aperture a cool breeze blew steadily, clean and invigorating. Massive walls, dingy and scratched with French names and coarse phrases, supported a low arched ceiling. Opposite the window was a door of worn mahogany with a small barred opening in its centre. The floor was paved with great uneven flags, moist and cold; and set into the wall in one corner were a pair of iron rings to each of which was attached a short length of iron chain. The straw on which he had been sleeping was piled deep and matted in a corner of the cell, and he sat up quickly as his nose became conscious of its musty, acrid smell.

Stiffly he got to his feet. His body was sore and aching and his shoulder pained with burning twinges. He regarded his hands, black and grimy in the slanting bar of sunlight. Then he passed his hand across his face; the yellow stubble of a beard was all too evident. He walked to the window and, stooping, peered through the opening, his lungs drinking in the cool air from the water. Before him in the morning sunshine the harbour extended blue and sparkling far to the east where a smooth green peak reared like a sentinel from the sea. Almost furtively he thrust his face into the deep opening until it was pressed against the bars. Now around the edge of the stone he could see that part of the harbour where the *Hercules* had anchored, but the blue water glittered empty; the *Hercules* was gone. Perhaps she had been brought nearer to the land, or, perhaps, and that was more likely, she was standing out to sea. The jutting stones and iron bars made it impossible for him to see.

His eyes fixed on the distant shore, he recalled the last few hours of the night previous. It seemed as though the sound of horses' hoofs were still ringing in his ears as he walked down the moonlit road. That had been the only sound for a time until the man who was called Philipe had cursed him for his slowness. It was then that they had halted him and searched him, their pistols

covering him with willing fingers on the triggers. His own pistol had been taken and some small sum of money, how much he did not remember. It was not the loss that rankled, but the humiliation that smouldered hot within him. He could still vividly see their dark leering faces and hear the coarse jocular remarks that they flung at him.

Then the march proceeded again. But now his captors were garrulous, and there was a sinister note in their taunting. He was a murderer, they told him, and with savage pleasure they suggested the prompt justice that would be accorded him. A murderer? He wondered how Mangan fared that morning. No! He could not have killed him. Hard as was the blow he had struck with the leaden inkwell, it was not a blow that carried death. It would leave a mark, however, on that cold, impassive face, an ineradicable mark. The thought pleased him.

At the edge of the town they had stopped while his captors awakened a guard of soldiers. Black, barefoot, and half-dressed the guard had stumbled out of the thatched shack where they had been sleeping, guns with fixed bayonets trailing noisily. He was a criminal, a murderer, caught with considerable difficulty, so the officers implied, a dangerous man whom they should watch carefully. He had demanded that Monsieur Samatan should be notified, but they had laughed at him. Still,

he reflected, Samatan would know soon enough; it would not be long before all Le Cap learned of what had happened.

With a parting taunt the two horsemen had departed, and with his hands tied behind him he had been hurried down to the old fort, a bayonet now and then pricking him forward when his feet lagged defiantly. And now from a barred window he regarded the empty bay. He walked across the room and put his shoulder to the door; it was locked firmly; there was no give to the iron-studded planks. A bar of sunlight fell on the stone floor beneath the window. The sun was high; it must be late in the morning.

Purposely he had kept his thoughts from Virginie. That she was safe he was confident. Leroy Mangan, intuition told him, would not hold against her the escapade of the past evening; he would realize only too keenly where lay the cause of her revolt. He would try to mollify her and win her back to obedience. But what would be Virginie's reaction? Unhesitatingly John Bush knew that she would suffer no retreat. Her words and her eyes had told him; her lips had sealed their covenant.

It was characteristic of his nature that he would even still hold her apart from the situation which involved him, although she was the central figure in all that now concerned him. All his life

he had lived with men, and the inheritance of his Quaker ancestry had given him a coldness of manner that his life had intensified and hardened. But beneath this austerity that found its only apparent relief in occasional displays of reckless daring burned the fire of a romantic nature of which he alone recognized the existence. How often in the lonely hours of solitude in his cabin or on the heaving deck of the brig he had allowed his imagination to draw himself the central figure in desperate adventures in which always figured a girl of his own imagination, a girl such as he now saw in the living body of Virginie.

Strange as were all the happenings of the recent past, there was nothing new in them to surprise him. Never before had he felt the warm moist lips of a woman given freely to his own, and yet how often had he imagined that delicious moment; so often and so clearly that it seemed a realization of something he already knew. Not yet had he given himself entirely to Virginie; there was a surface that he had not entirely broken through that still separated them. Not yet had he bared to her the hot love of his passionate inner nature.

There was a sound of feet in the passage and two voices indistinct through the thick walls. Then a key scraped, feeling for the lock; it clicked in the keyhole and the door pushed slowly open.

The gaoler and Monsieur Samatan entered. For a moment the two men regarded Bush as though startled by his appearance, and well might have been their astonishment, for the young man who confronted them, with his dishevelled and matted hair, his unshaven face and a torn and bloody coat, presented an unfamiliar figure in comparison with the always immaculate and even dapper Captain Bush whom they previously had known. Monsieur Samatan was dressed in white linen and carried a closed basket in one hand and a bamboo cane in the other. He handed the basket to the gaoler and bowed with a flourish of his broad-brimmed hat.

"I have come," he said, "to the assistance of my friend, although I must be cautious because of the feeling that the injury to Monsieur Mangan has engendered. Gubo"—he pointed with thin, dark fingers to the gaoler—"may be trusted. We can speak freely."

"Tell me," Bush broke in, "how serious is this injury that it was my privilege to inflict on Mangan, and what is the price that I must pay? How long can I be confined here? What will happen to me?"

"Leroy Mangan will not die," the other answered, "but feeling is high against you. Pierre Nicholas demands your life, and there are others who would have you shot for your attempt

on the life of a man who holds great prominence here. Escape is impossible. Could I aid you, I would do so. But that cannot be. I would suggest, my dear captain, that you plead for mercy and forget speedily the unfortunate attachment that has brought this difficulty upon you."

The suggestion brought a flush to Bush's cheek. The thought that such a remark could be made to him by this man of colour affronted him. Then he saw in the brown eyes of Samatan a friendliness that he knew to be genuine ; it was a look that came out to him like a helping hand ; a look that brought his gratitude instantly to the fore. He put a hand on Samatan's shoulder.

"My good friend," he replied, speaking also in French, "I cannot tell you how deeply I appreciate your coming, although what you tell me promises little for my security. You have referred to Mademoiselle Goutier ; that is indeed reason for my presence in Le Cap and without her I shall not leave, even if my freedom be given me."

Samatan shook his head sadly. "Captain Bush"—he spoke with evident emotion—"we have been friends, yes? I am a man of colour, but you have not noticed my black skin ; you have seen only my blood which is red like your own. You have been honourable with me and we have made money together and drank wine together and

we have eaten at the same table. And now you are a prisoner in my country. I cannot tell you how greatly I desire to aid you and how difficult it is for me to do so. Be strong, monsieur, but be not foolhardy. The good God, whom we both know, will not desert you." Then in a lighter tone he continued, taking the basket in his hand and removing the cover: "Here is a fowl and bread, some fruit and a flask of wine. The fare of Gubo is coarse, but the best he can offer you, so I bring you these trifles."

Bush took the basket and set it on the floor; then he clasped the hand of Samatan in his own. "My friend," he said, "I thank you." Samatan averted his eyes. "But what have you heard?" Bush continued; "you have not told me all. Tell me the truth; it is a kindness. You know what is my fate?"

The merchant walked slowly across the stone floor and stood looking out through the barred window to the sea. In a corner Gubo squatted on his haunches, a bundle of huge keys that hung from his belt tinkling against the stones.

"I do not know," Samatan spoke finally, "what has been finally decreed. As yet there is no decision, but, my good friend"—he turned and faced Bush—"if you believe in the God of your father, I bid you pray to Him, for from what I hear and from what I know of my people, you

will not see Mademoiselle Goutier again, or any others of your friends."

"You mean," Bush interrupted, "that whether or not this dog Mangan dies I am to be killed?"

"Your speech," the other answered, "is more direct than mine, but you have caught my meaning. You were captured red-handed, Monsieur, escaping from an act which can find no justification in the eyes of my people. You were captured in the company of the ward of the man whom you attacked, attempting to abduct her from those who consider themselves her rightful guardians. And in the persons of Captain Nicholas and Monsieur Mangan you have given insult and personal injury to two who are among the highest in the kingdom of Christophe."

"Does mademoiselle know of what has befallen me?"

"She will know soon enough. Mangan will live. Your assault was painful, but not fatal," he added.

"Perhaps"—Bush gave a glance at the gaoler squatted in the corner—"perhaps when I am taken from here there will be a chance. A quick dash. My ship; that is she, the *Hercules;* she flies the English flag."

Samatan shook his head. "I carry but evil news, my captain; the vessel of which you speak is gone. At dawn she sailed. You must find another way to your freedom."

"She has sailed!" Bush shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, that was the order. And yet! Huggett, I would not have thought? But then!" He slapped Samatan lightly on the shoulder. "Come, my friend, there are yet cards unplayed, although we may not know their faces. Go now. I will not compromise you by your presence here. Perhaps I may need you later. I thank you for your friendship which bade you come."

The two men clasped hands. From the floor Gubo, seeing that the meeting was at an end, rose heavily and, unlocking the door, pushed open the great panel. They were gone, and Bush heard the key clink in the lock and the sound of their retreating feet melt into the silence.

Casually he examined the basket Samatan had brought. Beneath a bit of white cloth was a roasted fowl, two oranges, a half-loaf of wheat bread, and a quart of wine. His fingers strayed to the bottom, and suddenly he groped hurriedly, spilling the contents on the floor. That was a knife his fingers had encountered, a slim sharp dagger blade in a leather sheath. With a furtive glance at the door lest he might be seen, he concealed the knife in his breast.

He sat down on the musty straw. Through the little window the sun flamed in a bar of palpable heat that made the air of the room almost unbearable. It was very still. From off the water came

men's voices from some anchored boat. That was all. Through his mind the incidents of the recent past recalled themselves in inverse order: the tragedy of the past night, the *Hercules,* the loss of the brig, the running fight in the corvette, the climax of his last visit to Le Cap. Fondly his thoughts lingered on Virginie; through all the maze of adventures he could see her, the motivating cause, the one objective. His whole life, it seemed, had been lived in these past few weeks, all since that night when they had sat in the moonlight. Behind that night was his other life, cold, austere, and purposeless, a succession of seafaring years, splashed here and there with the colour of some seaport romance that was ended as soon as the vessel put to sea. He had been cold till then, cold in the eyes of women, and yet a man desired. Women had feared him; their eyes had dropped before his level blue gaze, and yet they sensed the passion that smouldered there, passion that required but a spark to release. He, too, knew that icy barrier that confined him. That was why the sea charmed him; that was why he had never refused the opportunity to risk himself in some reckless adventure. He remembered the Moorish galley that had attacked him off Tripoli. He was but a mate then, but he had leaped down alone into the cockpit at the moment when the Moors were themselves scrambling up the chains. As

though it were yesterday he could feel his cutlass, once, twice. As from a madman they had retreated. He smiled grimly and his hand sought the knife at his heart. That was then. But now there was a purpose in his actions that was definite and compelling. Like a burning flush he felt again the lips of Virginie against his own. Then he turned his head quickly, his ears catching hold of the silence. There was the sound of feet in the passage.

Equally silent was the house of Monsieur Mangan that bright morning. From a cloudless sky of burning blue the sunlight flooded the house and garden. In the penetrating light the plastered walls flamed white among the vivid green of banana, palms, and mangoes. Already the stone flags in the garden were hot to the touch of bare, black feet that now and then passed silently from the house to the servants' quarters. No breeze stirred the long fronds of green; no sound of bird or insect interrupted the quivering stillness.

The bedroom of Monsieur Mangan was darkened. It was a great room on the ground floor with white walls and a high ceiling. In one side tall green latticed doors, now tightly closed, opened to the garden, and through the chinks little needles of sunlight penetrated, tongues of still flame, to the inner gloom. Opposite the doors and in the far side of the chamber was an enormous bed of red

mahogany designed after the new fashion of the Empire with graceful curved head and foot. The white mosquito bar was drawn back and caught in a brass hook against the wall. Some French chairs and a table, all of red mahogany, one chair placed at the bedside, comprised the furniture; all, except for a massive wardrobe that stood at least eight feet high against the wall on one side of the room.

In the centre of the other side and facing the wardrobe was a small white panelled door that obviously opened to the rest of the house. The brass latch lifted quietly, and as the door opened Virginie stepped into the room. She was in white, and her dark hair, coiled heavily about her head, intensified the pallor of her face. Softly stepping, she crossed the waxed boards to the bedside. As in death she saw the outline of the long, lean body beneath the sheet.

Tall and commanding as Leroy Mangan invariably appeared, the white expanse of the great bed dwarfed him almost to a figure of insignificance. He lay upon his back, his head sunk deep in a single pillow, his face covered, except for the lower half, with a folded napkin. Below the cloth was visible the mouth, a straight, thin line formed by two bloodless lips, and the sharp jaw now blue with a stubble of the night's growing. His hands folded on his breast beneath the sheet increased the sugges-

tion of death, an effect which would have been complete were it not possible to see the even rise and fall of his breathing.

"Virginie!" His quick ear had caught her quiet footfall even before she reached the bedside. He spoke the word with great distinctness, although his voice was low and the tight lips seemed hardly to move at its utterance.

"Monsieur?"

"You will sprinkle some water on this cloth from the basin." Then as he heard her turn toward the table he continued, speaking in French, each word pronounced with slow distinctness. It was a strange hard voice, a voice seemingly devoid of tenderness or love or pity, a cold, dead voice, judicial, impersonal. "Perhaps," he said, "you may wish now to explain some things that have happened, in order that I may plan how best to consider the future."

The girl lifted the basin from the table and carried it to the bedside. With slender fingers she spattered the water on the cloth. She did not answer.

"Has this Bush been taken? You will at least answer a question?" There was an unexpected glint in his voice, a hardness that made her instinctively turn from the bed and replace the basin on the table.

"He has been taken," she echoed.

"You are aware that I shall ask the extreme penalty?"

Slowly she walked to the doors. Through the green slats the heat of the sunshine choked her. For a moment a dizziness caused her to put out her hand to steady herself. A numbness held her body.

"You will ask that?" she answered faintly.

"Can I forget that this man has sought to thwart my wishes, that like a thief he has entered my house, that he has tried to kill me and escape with a member of my household who, moreover, aided him in his vile purposes?"

She heard his hands rustle the sheet as he unfolded them and thrust them out straight on each side until he lay stark as an heroic crucifix. The thought held her and she cowered against the door as though from a blow.

Back through years of memory she recalled him. He had always been so to others, cold, cruel, and unforgiving. But she had never before associated this aspect of the man with herself. To her he had been a distant yet splendid person whose casual caress had warmed her affection. Never had she forgotten her obligation; to him, she admitted, she owed all. One incident alone stood out from the even retrospect; that was the night he had told her of his decision that she would become the bride of Pierre Nicholas. She remembered the stifled

cry of terror that had escaped her lips; how she had fled finally to her small white room and on her knees sobbed out her misery before the ivory crucifix above her bed. It had relieved her, that impassioned hour of communion. But she had risen from her knees mentally numbed into a blind fatalism. She had tacitly accepted her guardian's edict, but in her inner heart she knew that the good God to whom that evening she had wept out her prayer would never permit the final fulfilment. And so with a blind, unreasoning, unheeding faith she had gone on accepting the burden of each day, buoyed by the hope of an ultimate and miraculous liberation.

She recalled in a passing flash of thought the evenings that Nicholas had spent in the house of her guardian. Not once had she permitted the slightest breakdown of the barrier. Once, indeed, had he kissed her hand on leaving, and in her room a few minutes later she had scoured the spot as though to remove a stain. She realized that the suave Pierre Nicholas felt embarrassment in her presence, and she raised higher the wall between them. With never a word as to the future she left him floundering in a tangled conversation that led nowhere. To him she was inaccessible, incomprehensible.

Then came that evening when John Bush had walked across the waxed floor of the candle-lighted

room and his clear blue eyes had sought her own. The touch of his hand had sent a tremor through her. Vaguely she wondered if this was the answer to her prayer; if this Yankee sailor in his bright-buttoned blue coat was the hand of God stretched down for her deliverance. She remembered him vividly from the years before when he had visited Le Cap. With the passion of budding womanhood she had seized upon him and made a hero of him in her daydreams, her lover and her champion. Ever since she had first met him—two years, but it seemed longer—she had played with his memory. How many times had he saved her from an imaginary peril; how often had his presence completed the romance of her dreams! Then he had actually returned to her; perhaps in answer to her prayer. But it was no imaginary peril in which he found her.

So in the very hour of her need he had come to her; come with the wrinkling smile on his lips. Lips! She too recalled with passion that long minute when they had met and the fearless blue eyes that could read no danger in adventure however hazardous. Surely he had come by the dear God's direction.

She looked with misty eyes across the room. Gray against the sheet the hands and wrists of Mangan stretched clenched. The thought of the crucifix fascinated her. Vaguely she coupled the

thought with that first night of anguished prayer. Was the suggestion a sign or was it a thing provoked by evil?

Through the green slats she heard the fountain trickling, a tiny jet falling into the marble bowl. There was no other sound. Wearily she regained control of herself. She felt weak, but strangely calm and composed. The darkness of the room suggested coolness, but the air was hot and still. Through the slats of the door the sunlight poured with palpable heat.

"Virginie!" The low incisive voice startled her. She crossed the room to the bed.

"There is something I can bring to you?" she asked.

"No. It is this: until you receive my permission you will not leave this house. Under no circumstances will you try to communicate with this man or with anyone concerning him. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"You will obey me implicitly?"

"I shall not promise."

There was a strength in her words that could not be misunderstood. From the bed came no sound or movement. She watched the lean jaw protruding from the damp napkin and the thin, firmly closed lips. She knew those lips. Not a month past she had watched them close in silence.

That was the last night she had pleaded with him to release her from his promise to Nicholas. At first she had sensed his weakening. In a cold way Mangan loved her as an austere father loves his child. But his resolve could not be shaken; he had closed his ears to her entreaties; and finally he had risen from his chair and looked down at her. Not again had he opened those thin, sealed lips. Silently he had passed from the room.

So it had been in the years of her girlhood. Out of the past came sharp memories. He had been generous with her, but when came the time when his "no" was uttered, no pleading had ever drawn from him a reversal. Never again was the subject discussed between them. And now for the first time in her memory she defied him. Her chin lifted unconsciously and she felt her skin burn with the flush of emotion.

Mangan's long white fingers groped along the sheet for the bell-cord. Bending slightly, she put the green tassel in his grasp. Far off in the house she heard the metallic jingle as he pulled the cord.

That was all then. She knew he would not speak again.

"I am going," she said. "If you require me, I shall be in the drawing-room. The doctor will come again in the evening."

In the hall she met Lucien, her guardian's manservant, a small black man whose snow-white hair and wrinkled face gave an indication of the great age which was attributed to him. He was barefoot, but wore long and heavily starched white cotton trousers and an old plum-coloured velvet coat which had been at one time the property of his master. The old man shrank back against the wall as Virginie passed, two rolling white eyeballs following her as though he expected to see in her some new and unexpected action as terrifying as the happenings of the night before.

As though suddenly recollecting something, he lifted a black finger to his lips, his frightened eyes still rolling grotesquely.

"Mademoiselle Virginie"—his voice was a rasping whisper and the French words came almost incoherently from his toothless gums—"man waiting to see you in my house."

The bell again jangled loud and impatient and the old man threw himself into a tottering run down the passage.

In the drawing-room all the signs of the last night's struggle had been removed. The air was bright with sunlight deflected from half-drawn blinds. The chairs stood in their accustomed order; a tall silver urn on the central table bloomed with a gay bouquet of crimson flowers.

She opened one of the tall doors to the garden

and light and heat struck her forcibly. High against the blue sky the royal palm drooped its graceful green fronds. Everywhere beneath it other trees filled the space with tropic luxuriance. Quickly she looked about her. The garden was deserted. Like a corridor the path led beneath a roof of branches so thickly meshed that the light seemed a transfused greenish radiance in contrast to the hot yellow sunshine above.

Vainly Virginie tried to imagine who might be the man who waited to see her in the cabin of her guardian's old slave. That he would bring news of John Bush she expected. But what news?

There was no door to the cabin. Built against the wall with a half-dozen others, the small white-washed buildings with their thick thatched roofs of palm presented a row of open doors to the hard-trodden strip of ground that was the recreation ground of Mangan's servants. It was not often now that she came here, but the sight of the cabins brought back a flashing recollection of her childhood. Again she saw herself a small child in a white dress standing beside the knee of Lucien as he sat on a chair beside his door. He was cutting from a bit of wood a small idol-like image which later Augustine, a great full-breasted Nubian who had died two years back, had dressed in a finely sewn garment of her own design and making.

Augustine was Lucien's wife. She adored Virginie, and that had strengthened the old man's devotion to his master's ward.

Now only three small naked black children played quietly in the shade. The servants were all in the house at their work. There would be no interruption. It was dark inside the cabin, and for a few seconds she stood in the door frame adjusting her eyes to the half-light. Then she saw a gigantic negro rise from a bench in the corner and advance toward her. She had never seen him before, and instinctively she shrank back a little. Then she noticed a look in the pleading eyes that reassured her.

"Who are you?" she asked.

The man raised a hand and pointed to his mouth. Then he shook his head violently and a queer clucking sound came from his throat. With slow fingers he fumbled in his belt and produced a crumpled paper. Eagerly Virginie took it from his outstretched hand.

If you would save the life of your friend, you must not delay. It is within the power of either Monsieur Mangan or Captain Nicholas to spare.

"A FRIEND."

Impetuously she raised her face to the negro, a dozen questions on her lips, but the mute shook his head. Again she read the paper. Who could

be this "friend"? So haste was necessary! Vaguely she realized that vengeance moved swiftly at Le Cap. There had been times before when someone who came frequently to the house came no more. Mangan had never fully answered her questions; he had shrugged his shoulders and patted her hand. It was best ever to be loyal to the Emperor, he had invariably added.

Then came an impulse to run to Mangan's bedside and to implore his aid and forgiveness. Mangan could save. But the thought of the thin bloodless lips and the white bandage arrested her. In those few tremendous hours of the past night she had realized that she had for ever alienated herself from him. Always she had secretly feared him; all her life the chill of his presence had suppressed her. Now she saw him as the others knew him; the slender bond of affection which had existed was irrevocably destroyed. He had even told her that he would show no mercy; he had forbidden her to leave the grounds or to communicate with anyone. But she was doing that now. A cold terror of the helpless man in his darkened room possessed her and she snatched a frightened glance over her shoulder.

"Can you understand me?" she asked. "Can you hear?"

The negro's thick lips parted from his gleaming teeth and he nodded, smiling in affirmation.

"Remember, then," she continued, "no one must know that I have seen you except the friend that sent you. Tell him, whoever he may be, that I shall do all that I can. You cannot speak, but you can hear and they will question you. You will shake your head, yes. You understand?" He nodded again. "You will perhaps see Captain Bush? Yes? Then, if he asks you, I am well and no harm will come to me. He must not risk his life again for me."

She turned and retraced her way beneath the leafy roof of the garden path to the house. Who this strange negro was or whence he had come did not for the moment occur to her. Only could her mind grasp the single thought which those few written words implied. The life of John Bush was forfeit and if she would help him her assistance must be immediate. She must think. Something must be done, something must be done! Leroy Mangan and Pierre Nicholas—either of them could save him. But would the man who had been assaulted in his own house aid his enemy? There were men who even under such a circumstance might be moved by her entreaty, but not Leroy Mangan. That she again realized. Nicholas? Perhaps; there lay her solitary hope.

She closed the doors quietly behind her and sat down in a chair beside the table to think. She could send a note to Nicholas and he would come

at her bidding ; of that she was certain. Then it became more difficult. Could she expect in this sensuous man of colour, for whom she had never concealed her contempt and dislike, a chivalry which would lead him to seek the release of the very man who had struck him that night in the café and who later had tried to take her from him ? She remembered her guardian's look when Nicholas had told him of that incident. She had gone into the garden to dream in the starlight, and she had not come back when she had heard Nicholas enter. Clearly she overheard his account of the affair, and through the door she had watched Mangan's face harden while he listened.

In the dining-room Lucien was setting the table. It must be noon then. The day was half-gone. Already probably John's fate had been decided. Perhaps by sunset all would be over. The horror of the situation seized her with all its terrible significance : her helplessness, the fate that awaited her, and particularly the fate of this man who had become to her a personification of all the strength and beauty and love of which she had ever dreamed.

From the stand she selected a quill and dipped it in the inkwell. Last night that leaden thing had been a weapon in the hand of her lover ! She took a piece of paper from the drawer and began to write. Then she sanded the wet letters she had

written and read them carefully. She completed the note. It was brief and cold, but it would bring him; of that she was certain.

The sound of horses' hoofs startled her. Someone was coming up the drive. There was silence. Then a man's step scraped on the floor of the vestibule. She could hear it plainly in the stillness of the house. The steps came down the hall. In a moment the tapestry would be parted and he would enter the room where she sat. Only a few of her guardian's most intimate friends came so unceremoniously. She turned her head as she heard the rustle of the tapestry. With a startled gasp she rose from the chair. Pierre Nicholas stood in the doorway, mopping his beaded forehead with a yellow handkerchief. He saw Virginie and made a low bow. He was immaculately dressed in the uniform of the bodyguard of the King; high black boots, white breeches, and a green coat heavily ornamented with gold. His waistcoat was of a cream-coloured satin with brass buttons, and the high white stock about his neck met in a heavy ruffle of soft white fabric.

"Mademoiselle"—he smiled as he spoke—"a vision in white in this quiet house is cooling on so hot a day. I trust that you are in health and happiness."

Virginie regarded him and his glance dropped before the gaze of her deep dark eyes. She saw

before her in the doorway, in the person of Pierre Nicholas, a man of perhaps five and thirty; tall, well-built, and alert in his every movement, his sallow face slightly inclined to heaviness. His hair was black and straight, the nose narrow above, but widened slightly too much at the nostrils; the mouth was large and the lips, full and sensuous, were drawn slightly from a row of perfect teeth; the chin was heavy and there was an indication of fatness about the jowls. His skin was white, undeniably white, but indefinably the native strain was evident.

"Will you please be seated?" she said finally. "There is something I would say to you."

With a slight indication of surprise he walked across the room and sat down in a chair before her. The smile had left his lips. She still stood, her back against the table.

"You are, of course, aware of all that has happened in the past few hours?" The colour was gone from her face and her nails whitened as her fingers clenched the table-rim.

"Yes; the story of these unhappy occurrences has been brought to me."

"I love Captain Bush."

Nicholas had not expected her statement. His heavy face twitched with agitation. With a forced calmness he said, "I can imagine that a more than ordinary interest in this man prompted your action;

may I say, mademoiselle, your most ill-advised and incomprehensible action?"

"What is to be the fate of Captain Bush?"

A look of malevolent satisfaction glinted in Nicholas's eyes. He did not answer immediately her question, but watched the bar of sunshine that lay like glowing metal on the floor before the door. Then he replied almost casually:

"The captain, this Bush, has now twice offended. He has without provocation attacked an officer of the King, and later, last night, he attempted the murder of Monsieur Mangan in his own house and the abduction of his ward. He is now a prisoner in Fort Picolet. It is ordered that he be shot at sunset."

A gasp, a quick intake of her breath, came from the girl's lips. She swayed slightly, then she flung herself into the great stuffed chair of Leroy Mangan and her body quivered with the torment of her emotion. But no sound came from her. Nicholas got up and walked to her side and laid his hand on her shoulder. As though touched by a hot iron, she recoiled. He saw her eyes, dry and wild with terror, turned toward him, a choking cry of horror, inarticulate and terrifying, came from her throat. Like a wounded animal she cowered deeper in the chair as though to escape him.

"Calm yourself, mademoiselle." He withdrew his hand and spaced the fingers on his hip. "This

frenzy cannot save your lover. Come, there are other things that can do more. Let us talk sanely and perhaps to some purpose."

Slowly Virginie straightened herself. Her dress had slipped from her shoulder, but she was unconscious of the smooth, white curves that it disclosed. With a steady gaze of appraisal, Nicholas regarded her. His eyes were fixed on the white skin ; he saw her breast rise and fall beneath the sheer bodice.

"He is to die to-day," she repeated, "at sunset?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, unless——"

"Unless?" the word came from her with a little cry. "You mean, monsieur?"

"You have forgotten our wedding day?"

"Our wedding day?" She repeated the words without understanding.

"It has been set for Easter——"

"If I die by my own hand, I shall never marry you!" Her voice rose in a high scream as she spoke. "No, never! Oh, the very thought is impossible! You, you—I hate you! I loath you! I shall die before you touch me. Go!" Quivering, she regarded him, a flame of terror and anger scorching her cheeks.

"Softly, mademoiselle. Hard words are evil messengers. You would save the man you love, *Bien!* That yet is possible. I would marry you." He leered at the bare shoulders. "There are

reasons other than yourself. Our wedding day is long to wait for. A week, perhaps, and so you will promise me, and this Bush lives! *Oui?* You say you love him, and you loath me, Pierre Nicholas, intimate of the King. How much do you love?"

Her momentary passion had passed. Dumb and stunned, she looked at him. The shifting eyes of Nicholas dropped before her. With an attempt at nonchalance, he flecked the dust from his boot-top with the yellow handkerchief.

"You will barter his life for my body?"

He did not immediately answer. From the other room came the clink of glass and silver where Lucien arranged the table.

"Yes, that is it, but it could be better said."

"Do you not understand, monsieur, that I do not love you, that the thought of such a marriage is a terror to me and that I love this man who is now in your power to save? You ask me to marry you; you desire that? If some esteem for me prompts that desire, can you not be generous and earn my eternal gratitude? Oh, monsieur, I beg of you, I implore you, be merciful!"

Nicholas shifted uneasily in his chair. Then a cunning look came into the shifting eyes.

"You have my proposal, Mademoiselle Goutier. My orderly is at the gate. Time passes. I go now to the room of Monsieur Mangan. Your

answer will send my orderly to Fort Picolet and his life will be spared. Or—persist in your resolve and I shall not again offer an alternative. The life of your lover is in your hand. Is it yes or no that I shall hear?'' He walked toward the door. ''Eh, *bien,*'' he continued over his shoulder, ''it is best that this Yankee scum should die. *Oui?*''

''Monsieur''—her voice was hardly more than a whisper—''you will swear by the good God that this is the truth, that his life will be saved?''

''Yes, if——''

''Yes,'' the word burst from her, ''I consent.''

With a smile Pierre Nicholas thrust aside the tapestry and walked down the hall to the room of Leroy Mangan.

THE sound of feet that John Bush had heard from his cell grew loud in the corridor. There was something terrifying in this steady tramping as it came nearer and nearer ; it was in keeping with the stone walls and the rusting iron chains and rings and musty smell of the place. The noise stopped abruptly before the door. An order was given, a swift sentence in French, gun butts rattled on the stone. A key clicked in the lock.

The young lieutenant who entered wore a worn green uniform and a gilt scabbard hung at his knee ; the bare sword he carried in his hand. He was a tall, thin-hipped, wide-chested negro with skin so black that his face might have been cut from a block of ebony. Behind him a guard of six men stood at shambling attention.

"Monsieur Bush"—he spoke excellent French and there was a courteous tone in his voice—"you will accompany me, if you please. The Commandant desires your immediate presence." He bowed and Bush returned the formality.

The little room to which Bush was escorted was damp and odorous. On the whitewashed walls, names and obscene French words and phrases were

scratched or written with charcoal. Through the narrow windows was a glimpse of the green of palm-trees and a fragment of blue sky. Dirty straw littered the floor and in one corner a low cot was piled with soiled bed-linen. A small table stood in the centre of the room and behind it in a gilded chair, upholstered in crimson brocade, sat Antoine Pelletin, Commandant of the garrison of Le Cap Française.

In the slanting light from the windows Bush saw a small man with close-cut gray hair and a face striking for its unmistakable stamp of cruelty. He was not as black as the young lieutenant of the guard ; there was an ashen colour to the wrinkled skin that hung in pouches beneath the yellowish eyes, an ashen colour accentuated by a stubble of gray hair on the broad square jaws and across the upper lip. The mouth was loose and sensuous and the half-opened lips disclosed a row of teeth sharp and irregular. Then he raised his head and regarded Bush with a look in which hate and satisfaction were clearly dominant. The silence was oppressive and the heat of the room almost intolerable.

"You are convicted"—General Pelletin began to speak as though he read from the paper in his hand—"of assault with the intent to kill on the person of the King's officer, Captain Pierre Nicholas ; of attacking with the same purpose Monsieur Leroy Mangan in his own house which you entered

by force; with the attempt to abduct the ward of Monsieur Mangan, and with other acts of violence against officers and subjects of the King." He turned his eyes to the lieutenant. "The firing squad at sunset."

Under his torn coat Bush felt his heart pounding; the sweat trickled in hot drops from his forehead. The horror of the situation sickened him. Then he flung back his shoulders. He must not let this man sense his agitation.

"So, I understand"—Bush spoke with studied slowness—"that I, a citizen of the United States of America, am sentenced to be murdered without trial or hearing. Mark you"—he pointed a finger at Pelletin—"my country will not suffer this insult to pass unpunished."

"Bah!" General Pelletin spat on the straw. "What is it, these bragging United States, a race of traders and upstarts. Do we, who have run the French and the English into the sea, listen to the boasts of an American? Where is your flag? Have not the English driven it from every ocean? Do I fear a country such as that? No!" He glanced at the lieutenant. "To the compound. You have heard."

From the corner of his eye Bush estimated the distance to the nearest soldier. With a leap he could reach the table. He could feel his fingers tighten about the throat of Pelletin. It was an

idle thought; death would only come the more swiftly. A few hours at least of life remained. The lieutenant touched his elbow. Pelletin's head was bent over the strewn table. There was nothing now that he could do or say; with his head erect he walked out into the corridor; behind him he heard the feet of the guard rustling in the straw.

Le Cap was simmering in the sunshine; even the palm-trees seemed to droop in the breathless heat. From the long street that edged the harbour dust rose from beneath every passer's feet and hung, a yellow cloud in the air. From the water the sun reflected as from a sheet of metal and down from the high green wall of Le Morne it was flung back again on the stifled town.

Outside the walls of Fort Picolet a dozen negroes crouched in the shade. With languid interest they watched John Bush and the guard emerge from the entrance and turn down the street. There were some low muttered words and an old man screamed shrilly at Bush a mad taunting curse.

His hands were tied behind his back and Bush could feel the cord bite the flesh. From his forehead salty drops of sweat coursed down into his smarting eyes. His body ached and yearned for rest and sleep. A few hours more, he thought, and then perhaps it would be over, and a long rest begun in a shallow pit on the marish plain.

Several times in happier days he had ridden past

the barracks, a collection of long thatched buildings against the southern entrance to the city. There also was the wide field of sun-baked clay where the troops of the King drilled, a dusty field, or a quagmire of slimy mud, in accordance with the weather. From the drill ground the plain extended twenty miles to the south where abruptly the range of towering mountains piled up a precipitous barrier. And there, on a high peak, overlooking the plain, was the citadel of the King, and in the green valley of Millot under the shadow of the fortress was the Palace of Sans Souci.

The dust caked his tongue and the cord about his wrists pained cruelly. At the roadside people stopped to gaze at him. They were black, of various shades and types of features, and all regarded him with unfriendly eyes. A feeling of despair depressed him. Never had he felt so desolate; in all the world there could be no place so alien and remote as this crowded street of the Haytian capital. He did not blame them. The terror of the days of the French slave rule was all too fresh in their primitive minds. He was just another white man, an intruder in a black man's country won for the black man and by the black man by bloody sacrifice.

A few small ships were at anchor in the harbour. By now the *Hercules* was doubtless well out to sea. There would be a breeze there, beyond the island's

lee. On the left the water came up close to the road. There was Samatan's warehouse ; there was the place where the *Lucy* had discharged her cargo. On the right a continuous row of buildings lined the street. There was the Hôtel de la République. It basked in the sunshine ; within the closed shutters the air would be cool and damp and there would be things to drink. He could hardly swallow for the dust in his throat.

One of the soldiers pricked him in the back with the point of a bayonet. A tall black girl at the roadside laughed in a high clear voice. The ignominy of his position made his face flush hotly. It was at least good to realize that Virginie could not see him, a dishevelled captive driven by a band of black soldiers to the place of slaughter. She was safe ; he realized that she must be again secure in Mangan's keeping. She had been brave, and she had dared all for him ; he felt her clinging lips, her limp young body in the shelter of his arms. Would she marry Nicholas ? Somehow the thought no longer disturbed him. He had felt her courage ; he knew her love ; he was assured that Virginie would die before she would surrender to Pierre Nicholas.

High ruined walls flanked the right side of the road. Through tall windows Bush could look at the sky beyond. The masonry was blackened with smoke, the stones cracked with the heat of flames.

Once the finest mansion in Le Cap, now a dozen squatter families tenanted its roofless rooms. In that wide doorway died Raimond Ferrier holding the entrance against the revolutionary mob that filled the street, a black flood that poured with fire and sword into the frightened town from the distant hills and from the smoking ruins of plantations on the plain where but a few days before they had been slaves. Vainly had Le Cap resisted. It was a light that Ferrier first saw in the garden! There had been marching in the street, but he had not realized the extent of the uprising. But now he is alarmed. From the rear of the building the flames are climbing. In front in the street the mob is wildly screaming. There is the steady pom, pom, pom of the drums, drums of the Congo; the flames show yellow red through the windows. In the doorway the tall Frenchman fights gamely; five are the dead at his feet. A brick sweeps through the darkness. He staggers and falls. The black wave breaks over him. In a darkened room Madame Ferrier and the children sit waiting. The flames break through the floor above and the black wave recedes before the heat. It is over! Pom, pom, pom sound the drums. There are many other houses, and the night is but begun! A yellow glare shines on dark faces, crazed with madness. The wild singing rises above the roar of the burning building. Pom, pom, pom beat the drums of the

Congo! With a crash of falling timbers and a shower of yellow sparks the roof falls and flames shoot up against the quiet sky.

Bush often had heard the stories of that terrible night. Now his turn awaited, but not to die fighting; his was to be death standing before a white-washed wall, shot down by a squad of ragged negro soldiers. He wondered when his uncle would hear of it; perhaps never. No, Huggett would report to him. But perhaps Huggett would not know. What did it matter? Virginie? He put the thought from him; it could not, no, would not, be withheld from her.

The tall lieutenant halted them in the scant shade of a fig-tree.

"Monsieur," he spoke softly in Bush's ear while the men squatted on the ground, their guns dropped as a child throws down a toy. "It is hot; a minute of rest will refresh you." There was a friendly glint in the black eyes, an expression of pity in his face.

"*Merci;* can you but loose the cord a little? My hands are swelled with pain." He gave the lieutenant a look of appreciation and a friendly smile curved his lips. "That is better, my friend. I thank you."

Again they marched on. The buildings of the town began to give way to native huts. Ahead was the plain, shimmering with heat waves. There

were the barracks. A high wall surrounded a number of buildings, a solid wall of masonry built of blocks of stone evidently robbed from ruined houses in the town. On each of the four corners was a sentry box, and in the centre of the eastern wall a low doorway gave ingress. A couple of sentries in uniform slouched about the entrance which was further guarded by two bronze cannon placed on either side and covering the road.

One of the soldiers pushed open the door and in a single file they went through it. As Bush passed the shadow of the arch, he again experienced that sense of hopelessness that had possessed him when he stood before General Pelletin in the little room in Fort Picolet. It was another step, irrevocably taken, in the progress of his destruction; another door had closed between him and the liberty that had always been the very essence of his existence.

An indescribable stench greeted his nostrils, the sweet, sickish smell of decaying refuse, the smell of a place long frequented by unfortunate humanity. In the shadow of the walls they swarmed like flies, two or three hundred prisoners, men and women, their half-naked bodies decked in the pitiful rags of former garments. With sullen eyes they regarded him, not as a fellow sufferer in their misery, but as an enemy, a hated white man. An old woman, her face obliterated by disease, clutched at his coat as he passed and cursed him in a rasping voice.

In the distant side of the compound were the buildings where the more desperate prisoners were confined. It was there, he sensed, that he would be placed.

They crossed the compound and the lieutenant dismissed the guard and conducted Bush to a small room foul with refuse of former occupants. There was no light except through the barred window in the door through which the gloom of the hall feebly penetrated.

The lieutenant put a friendly hand on Bush's shoulder. "I am sorry," he said simply, "that this must be. It is not wise that we should incur the hate of another nation. If your friends hear of this they will be angry, eh? Perhaps a ship of war from the United States will come and ask for you. An answer would be hard to find."

"I am afraid," Bush answered, "that is not likely. We are at war with England. Her great navy surrounds us. There are other matters of far greater importance to the United States than the fate of a single one of her people. You are my friend?"

The lieutenant looked guardedly behind him. The corridor was empty. "Yes, I am your friend, but that cannot save you. At Fort Picolet, Monsieur Samatan talked with you and so I dare to be a friend to you. He knows the order that has been given. Perhaps he can help, for he is

strong. He wears the ring of Dessalines. But you have angered Nicholas, and he, too, is a great man."

From the compound came a wild cry that filled the little room, a long wail of anguish, terror, and anger. It was the sound of human voices, but in it was an animal note that dominated. Higher and higher it sounded.

Bush looked inquiringly at the lieutenant. "What is that?" he asked.

"The prisoners," the other answered. His voice was reluctant, and he turned as though to end the interview.

"They cry because——?"

"You will hear the guns presently. The condemned are being marched to the wall. They, whom you saw in the compound, sing their death march."

"They will be——?"

"*Oui*, monsieur; it is hard to speak of these things to one who is so soon to take part in them. They go even now to the killing place. Twice each day they march. Sometimes but one or two, more often many. There is always discontent among the people." Again he looked down the hall, and his voice lowered to a whisper. "Christophe is hard on his people. These are political prisoners that die thus. They have talked too freely. They are many."

Wild and terrible the wailing rose and fell, then as though by the closing of a door the sound ceased. Even more fearful was the silence. Neither spoke. Each waited for the ensuing sound. Quick and jarring came the rattle of a volley of musketry; then a few seconds later three pistol-shots. Shrill and piercing followed the scream of hate from the compound. Pandemonium had broken loose.

"It is always so"—the lieutenant spoke wearily. "They, too, will die, but in another way. They starve there and the sickness comes. Even the strong man, he does not last; it is too difficult to live. The bullet, it is more quick, and best, perhaps." He put his hand on Bush's shoulder. "I must go," he said. "Courage, my friend!"

Time passed with incredible slowness. Outside the barred door two ragged soldiers stood guard on their prisoner. For a while Bush tried to overhear their muttered conversation, but the few fragmentary sentences that he caught were meaningless. Slowly he paced up and down the little room. The heat was stifling, and from the foul floor and its covering of straw came an acrid odour that at times almost overcame him.

Not yet, even, had he recognized the fact that in a few short hours death awaited him. Throughout his life John Bush had constantly experienced

dangers that held irrevocable alternatives. With a twisting smile on his lips and a steady look in his blue eyes he had played with life and death daringly. It had been a game to him, this existence that had been thrust upon him, a game in which the highest colour seemed to glow when the danger was the greatest. He had made money readily, and he had distributed it again with a free hand. There had been nothing for which he had desired wealth; no one at whose feet it might be laid. Then had come Virginie.

At the thought of her his face softened and he stopped his nervous pacing and leaned against the wall. So, that was over! If only her problem were as completely solved as his own. He would walk out in the mellow evening light; there would be a volley from the squad of ragged soldiers, and then it would be over. He would not even hear the howls of the prisoners that would follow. That would be all! But for Virginie there would be a living death. His face expressed the horror of the thought. It might be better if she, too, might die a quick, painless death. Perhaps she would find that alternative.

There was a scuffling of feet in the passage. Someone was coming; the two soldiers assumed an awkward attitude of attention. A voice inquired the location of the cell of John Bush; he recognized the voice of Pierre Nicholas. Then

against the dim light of the corridor Bush saw a head appear at the iron-barred window in the door. The head disappeared and he heard Nicholas speak to the soldiers.

"This is where you keep the white man who is to be shot?" he asked. "*Oui? Bien!* Open the door." The lock was turned and the door opened. "Back there, to the far end of the passage, you!" Nicholas continued to the soldiers. Then he stepped into the cell and pulled shut the door behind him.

"*Bonjour,* Monsieur Bush"—he swept a half-bow at the silent man who stood watching him. "It is unfortunate, indeed, that we meet under circumstances such as these."

Steadily Bush regarded him. There was something in the man's insolence and daring that almost attracted him. Nicholas was the bigger man, but Bush knew his own strength. A sudden rush! It could be done. But Nicholas doubtless was armed. Not otherwise would he dare to close the door behind him and stand alone before a man whom he recognized as his mortal enemy.

"Perhaps you will explain why you are here?" Bush spoke slowly; distrust and scorn were evident in his words.

"Ah, Monsieur Bush, that is simple. With so little left of life perhaps you will listen to friendly advice, eh?"

"Friendly?"

"Is it possible that I could have another motive?" He glanced about the cell. "It is too bad that we cannot sit, and over a bottle of wine, perhaps, talk more easily. You would like to live?"

"Your question is offensive. I have asked no mercy. I would accept none from you. If that is all, please respect the short time left to me. Solitude is infinitely preferable to your company."

The fleshy face of Pierre Nicholas reddened perceptibly and a forced smile disclosed his white teeth. "I am conscious of your dislike for me, but possibly you would consider the intervention of another. I have talked with Mademoiselle Goutier; we make plans for our wedding day. She is so young, so tender in the heart. It gives her pain that the death of a friend should be necessary at such a time. She has asked me to make other disposition, you understand, eh? Perhaps now you will hear me?"

"I have made my answer, Captain Nicholas." The desire again possessed Bush to reach at the other's throat; a passionate yearning to destroy this creature who taunted him. Would it not be better, he wondered, that they both might die here in the mat of filthy straw on the cold damp stones, than that Nicholas should live to carry out his designs? Death waited him a few hours hence

against the whitewashed wall; what mattered it if it came the sooner? Then he was conscious that Nicholas was again speaking. He listened to him, his eyes studying the other's throat.

"It is that you will instantly leave this country; that you will never return. Mademoiselle this morning repents her actions; she has asked the forgiveness of her kind guardian and myself."

"You lie!" Bush spat the words from his lips.

Nicholas ignored the interruption. "She is tender," he continued, "and begs you to accept your life on that basis. She desires never again to see you."

"I repeat; you lie! That mademoiselle has interceded for me even to you is possible; the rest is falsehood."

"So you decline, eh?" Nicholas turned slowly toward the door. "You forget, monsieur, that you are young. The world is filled with young women. Is it not childish to throw away your life for one young woman you can never have? It is a fine gesture that you make and a useless one."

"There is the door. You will honour me by availing yourself of it."

Nicholas wheeled suddenly and thrust forward his face. "Bah! You fool! You try to interfere with Captain Nicholas and you see the conse-

quence! I shall think of you on my wedding day. You refuse my mercy. *Bien!* We shall see who is the stronger. The guns shoot and someone digs a hole for you. No, that is not my revenge. You must be alive; you must say to yourself, 'This is the wedding day of Nicholas.' So! 'This is the night that Virginie becomes the bride of Pierre.' It is not my pleasure to have you dead. No, it is more pleasant for me that on that night you are alive to think of me. You live, or you die; it is as I wish. A week from to-day I shall be wed. I beg of you to think of me."

As he spoke the last words, Nicholas backed swiftly to the door. With a jar it closed behind him. Then for a moment his face appeared in the window. "I hope you will enjoy yourself. It is true that I give you your life because a woman has asked it of me. It is yours, such as you will find it." Then Bush heard his footfalls retreating down the corridor and his voice faint in the distance recalling the sentries to their post.

It would seem only natural that this sudden reversion of Bush's fate would have lifted him, at least for the time, from the despair that had settled about him, but it is to his credit that it was not so much his own life or death that then affected him as the words of Nicholas which told him of the impending marriage. In the main he

believed what Nicholas had told him. To be sure, he had detected the obvious falsehood that Virginie had desired him to leave the country; she would sacrifice herself, he knew, for his safety; it was the way that Nicholas spoke that betrayed the lie. But the wedding day; that was different! There was something in the voice of Pierre Nicholas that bespoke verity. And the staying of his sentence beyond that day; there was a fine cruelty in the act. Doubtless Virginie had persuaded Nicholas to exert his influence and delay the sentence, but undoubtedly the girl had never realized the sinister advantage that Nicholas would take of the fulfilment of his promise.

Vaguely he wondered what would happen to him, but always his thoughts turned back to the slender girl with the great dark eyes in whose black depths he had seen burn the glint of love as she had held her face up to him. Again and again he saw her, but never could his fancy complete the picture. There was one sharp detail and then another, and occasionally a haunting, tantalizing vision of her that, when he tried to see it more vividly, faded completely. Her eyes most often came out of memory to him. Then, too, he could see and feel her hands, long, fine hands, delicate yet strong; warm hands that clasped his own and held them tightly. He could see her mouth, the full, red, parted lips and the

white teeth, and now he felt again their warm pressure against his own; and her hair against his forehead. His arms were about her; how limp her breathing body suddenly became as she relaxed in his embrace.

In the compound a tom-tom was beating, a weird, monotonous booming. The cell was almost unendurable with the heat of the afternoon sun that flamed on the flat roof. He sat down cross-kneed in the corner, faint with the heat, with lack of food and with infinite weariness.

Again his thoughts recalled the past. Never had he loved before; this was the first expression of the pent up emotion that he had stifled since boyhood. And because it was the first, it seemed as though his love rushed from him uncontrolled. Suddenly the gates of reserve had been opened; uncontrolled his love poured out from his very soul. He had known other women; many, in fact. There was the tall blue-eyed girl he had met at his uncle's table in Philadelphia; she had pleased his eyes and he admired her calm dignity and the garment of aristocracy that clothed her. He had appealed to her; he recognized her interest in his romantic history. But, for that matter, all women were more or less drawn to him. Perhaps it was because he didn't care. There was a fascination in his unconscious disdain. Another fleeting face came to him from

the gallery of the past. It was in Crete that they had met. He remembered how her arms had clung to him that night before the ship sailed, and how finally she had pulled from her bosom a knife and had stabbed at him when he had untwined her pleading arms from his neck.

Outside, the wheels of a waggon rumbled in the compound. He heard horses' hoofs.

But Virginie; never before had he imagined that a woman could so master his will. Not by any one thing did she hold him; it was the rare blending of her character that had turned the whole direction of his life. In her was all the breeding of ancestry, and the culture of France combined with that tremendous emotionalism that reflected the fire in her soul. She could be calm, gentle, clinging in apparent weakness, and she could grow white with anger, and love with a passion that left him shaken by its intensity. Now she was to become the bride of Nicholas. Clearly he saw and understood; she had bought his life, bought it with her delicate white body. To something worse to her than death she had given herself that he might live. She was the pledge, the hostage for his life.

If only she had let him die! But no! That would not have saved her, unless by her own hand she had chosen to join him in death. In seven days! It was so soon. "Seven days; seven

days!" He repeated the words, then he got up quickly to his feet. There was the old light again in his wide, blue eyes. Seven long days in which to euchre fate. Love and life were the stake. Flung in his face was the challenge. In some way he would find her, would save her from Nicholas. Brave but appealing he saw the great black eyes again. A smile quivered on his lips.

Down the corridor came footsteps. The door opened, and the lieutenant flung his arms about his shoulders. The black face was alive with gladness; in a voice thick with emotion he tried to tell what had occurred.

"*Monsieur, mon ami*"—he released Bush from his embrace and at arm's length regarded him—"there is an order from Captain Nicholas, an official order, that your life is to be spared. *Mon Dieu*, it is a miracle that he who hated most should show such pity."

"He has himself told me."

"Ah, he has been here in his mercy. But you do not know"—his face grew grave—"it is not freedom yet. On Le Bonnet l'Évêque the King completes his citadel. Five thousand labour there, of whom many are prisoners. It is there that you will be taken, monsieur. Be brave, be strong! it is not a certainty of life that has been granted you, for thousands have died at that bitter work, but it is at least a better thing than a bullet, so,

and''—he kicked a hole in the straw—''a grave that is not deep enough to keep out the dogs.''

''I go?''

''Now! The day is late. Already the sun is low against Le Morne. To-night the prisoners march along the highway to Millot and the citadel. It is with them that you will go.''

He fished beneath the gay coat of his uniform for something at his belt. ''I am sorry,'' he said, ''that it must be so''—he held out a slender chain that terminated in bracelets of rusted steel—''but all the prisoners are——''

Bush held out his hands. The warm smooth circlets embraced them.

''Good-bye''—the negro held out his hand—''we cannot speak again, but perhaps some day we may meet; you may find freedom and you will not forget Jean Riou who had only friendship to give.''

Their hands met. ''I shall not forget. I thank you.''

''Come.'' He led the way to the door. ''You will walk ahead with the guard.''

On either side a ragged soldier fell in beside Bush. No one spoke. With eager lungs he drew in great breaths of the warm air of the corridor. After the stifling heat and stench of the cell, it seemed pure and almost invigorating. A glare of sunlight struck his eyes as they passed through

the door to the compound. There in the late light of the afternoon it lay much as he had seen it in the morning a few hours ago, hours that seemed as long as so many days. Only, the black swarm of prisoners had shifted their position; now they clustered in the shadow of the western wall.

With the guard shuffling at his side he marched toward the gate. The thought of escape was uppermost in his mind, but it seemed not the time. Then he began to wonder how they would get to Millot and when the gang of prisoners would start. He was thus speculating when a familiar sound made him look sharply behind him. From the western wall of the compound that weird cry that he had heard at noonday welled louder and louder in the quiet air. More, even than the first time he had heard it, was he struck by the strange, animal note in the massed voices. There was no tune or rhythm. It was a wailing sound, plaintive, melancholy, awe-inspiring.

From one of the buildings three men guarded by a dozen soldiers walked across the compound at right angles to the direction that Bush was being taken. Curiously, he watched them approach as their paths converged. All three had their hands pinioned behind their backs, all were hatless, and the disorder of their clothes suggested some days at least of imprisonment. They were

black, but he who walked in the front showed in his lighter skin a crossing of white blood which was also evident in his almost aquiline features. His white hair was cut square across the neck and brushed back from a high forehead, giving a strong contrast to the dark face beneath. The others were of less impressive aspect, but were obviously persons of some intelligence and standing in the community.

One of the soldiers turned to Bush, a grim laugh in his throat. "That man there"—he indicated with a toss of his head—"he, all three, go to die!" Then he added with ignorant awe in his voice, "Christophe is strong."

They passed. "Christophe is strong." The sentence rang in Bush's ears. Like a reincarnated Nero, this black despot ruled his kingdom. Under him, the people, ignorant, superstitious, and cowed by fear, slaved under his harsh command. In the hands of a few chosen officers the power was placed. And the firing squad or death in some form awaited those who dared to question the right and justice of the King.

The sun had sunk well below Le Morne which now rose exaggerated in the blackness of its shadows. Behind the clean-cut crest the light of the sunset flamed up into the blue, bars of golden light that radiated and faded imperceptibly, a luminous haze as from the door of a mighty

furnace. And now with the evening came a tremor of air from the sea ; an air faint, cool, and saline that stirred among the fronds of a royal palm before the gate, moving listlessly the green plumes as though with idling fingers.

Inside the gate a dozen men were collected, manacled in twos, wrist to wrist. All were negroes, big powerful blacks with broad shoulders and lean limbs. It was evident that the Emperor fed only prisoners of intelligence to the firing squad and conserved the young and strong offenders for the great building operations with which he was chiefly concerned.

Bush studied their faces. There was no chance of help here. Low-browed, thick-lipped, and sullen, they returned his gaze from steady eyes that seemed to reflect no thought or emotion. A few had squatted in the dust ; the rest idly regarded their captors or tinkered with their manacles, as a dog will worry with the leash that ties him.

The wailing of the other prisoners had stopped. Arrested by the silence, Bush turned, and with his eyes swept the walls of the compound. Even as he looked, from behind one of the buildings came the rattle of a volley of musketry, and as the sound died away in a feeble echo against Le Morne a wisp of thin white smoke rose above the roofs and the wild cry of anger and terror burst

again from the black throng along the shadow of the wall.

A feeling of mingled horror and disgust made Bush turn away his eyes and look down through the gate to the blue water of the harbour. A little turn of fate and he might now be lying there in the dust. But what was the price of his deliverance? The thought sickened him more than the thought of the death that had been averted. He must not weaken, he told himself; too much depended on his strength and resourcefulness in these brief seven days that awaited him, days fraught with disaster or success.

It was night when they started out along the broad white road that led south from Le Cap Française to the mountains. On the left the harbour lay smooth and black in the starlight. Salt marshes were on the right, dark blotches of low vegetation broken here and there by expanses of saline soil that glittered like snow. Far ahead under the pale blue night sky, the long wall of the mountain stood as though offering an impassable barrier to the people of the plain, a towering frontier behind which despots might find security from all the world. White lay the road, a long wide band of whiteness, curving slightly from the harbour. The dust was thick and soft and irritating. Here and there great flags of cut stone indicated that the way had once been smoothly paved. Now it was rutted and broken, another tragic memory of a departed civilization.

A dozen soldiers marched with the prisoners and in the rear followed an officer on horseback. Without order they marched, a black cluster of human beings stumbling forward in the starlight. There was no particular attention paid to the prisoners by their guards; the shackled wrists made escape impossible. And in this strange

company John Bush found himself; each mile that passed putting him that much farther from the house of Leroy Mangan and the girl who at that moment was watching with tired, wistful eyes the same stars which illumined the road to the citadel.

She was sitting in the garden, on the same seat where another night, which now seemed so long ago, she had sat with the young Philadelphia captain and had first heard from his lips words which she recognized as words of love. There was no other change. The fountain still trickled audibly in the still night. The heavy foliage of tropic trees stood dark and motionless. From the earth still radiated the heat of the afternoon. The air was saturated with warmth and dampness. The stars seemed very far away and the sky a space limitless and without dimension. Over her shoulder a yellow glow thrust out from the open doors. Within, the candles burned steadily. A leaf, rustling down from a branch, made her conscious of the absence of sound. The stillness irritated her. She felt that she must scream to break the spell.

From the corner of her eye she could see the latticed doors of her guardian's bedchamber. She had left him only a few minutes before. There she had changed the bandage on his face and put the bell-pull near his hand. Not a word had been spoken; he had not even opened his eyes when

she hovered over him. With a shudder she saw again in her imagination the greenish-black bruise on his forehead and the long clotted gash between the eyes. No wonder that he had fallen limp and unconscious before the impact of that terrible blow. The bruise and the blackened blood where the flesh was torn accentuated the whiteness of his face. His appearance had frightened her; it was corpse-like.

Within half an hour she would hear the sound of Nicholas's horse on the drive. Then he would stand in the doorway and call to her. For the first time in her life she desired his presence, for to-night he would bring news of the man who alone filled her heart; the man who at this very minute stumbled along the ruined road in the starlight to the slavery of the citadel.

Then, like an echo to her thought, she heard the beat of horses' hoofs, and a few minutes later she sensed the shadow of someone looking out into the gloom of the garden. It did not surprise her when she heard Pierre Nicholas call her name. It would have frightened her had she heard another voice.

She answered, "*Oui, monsieur,*" in words scarcely above a whisper, but he heard them and came down the low, broad steps, his spurs jingling on the stones. With eyes that seemed to see nothing she stared into the opacity of the shadows.

Then she felt him sit down beside her. That was where John had sat; that he should sit there in the place of her lover filled her with a flare of passion. She got up quickly and with her back turned to Nicholas continued her blind gaze into the shadows.

"I have kept my part of the agreement, Virginie." His voice was smooth and placating.

"He lives?" she questioned.

"He lives!"

"Is that all you have to tell me?" she cried.

"That he lives, mademoiselle, is not that enough? But I shall tell you more. Already he sails on his way to the Mole and from there he will by some ship reach America without difficulty." He paused, but the girl made no sound, and he continued, evidently satisfied that she was accepting his story. "I wish you could have seen his gratitude, mademoiselle; it was touching. That bravado of the American was gone absolutely. The fear of death was in his face. He could not start quickly enough, I assure you."

She turned and faced him. "Pierre Nicholas, I do not believe this. Too often in little things have I known you to forget the truth, to believe now this incredible story. If John Bush lives, and that I doubt, with reason, he has never left Le Cap in any manner such as you describe. What proof do you bring me that he lives?"

With scorn she watched the heavy lips struggle for an answer. In the starlight his face seemed very white, a bloodless mask.

"John Bush lives; I swear it. But for the last time have you seen him. That I have preserved his life is sufficient. Now you must keep your part of the bargain." He spoke slowly and with a tinge of anger.

"Bah!" Virginie tapped the stone with the tip of her slipper. "I do not believe you. Bring me proof that he lives. Your word means nothing to me."

As though to strike her, Nicholas sprang from the seat, but the girl stood motionless, her impenetrable eyes steadily fixed on his.

"So"—his voice was thick and the words came like a snarl—"this is a woman's trick. A proof? You but seize on this to crawl from your promise. But I, too, little one, can play the same game. A week? A week from to-night? *Oui?* Perhaps the time is too long for you to wait. If you would delay, I would hasten."

He turned and took a step toward the house. "I go to talk with Monsieur Mangan. In my absence, mademoiselle, remember my words. It is not well to cross too far the will of Pierre Nicholas."

Motionless as a statue she stood until he was gone, then she flung herself on the bench, her face

buried in her hands. Was he alive? The horror of the uncertainty numbed her brain. The story of the sailing vessel and his gratitude for the opportunity to escape was incredible. But if he had not left the island where could he be concealed? There were dungeons; she had heard Mangan tell gruesome stories about them, in the foundation of Fort Picolet, where he might be put away to linger and to die. That was more likely. But what reason was there for her to believe that Bush was alive? Surely for the purposes of Nicholas it were better that he were dead; Leroy Mangan, she knew, would have no compunction.

There was a faint crunch of gravel on the path. She peered into the inky shadow. That was a footfall; there could be no mistake in the sound, but no servants used that path. Who could be spying upon her at this time and place?

"Who is there?" she called in a low, firm voice.

There was no answer, but from the blackness a man came into the starlight, silently as a moving shadow. There was not even a perceptible sound of his feet on the stones of the path. She retreated a step with a little startled intake of her breath. Then she recognized him. It was the mute who had come to her that same morning. She pointed to the house where the open doors glowed with the rich yellow light of candles and raised a cautioning finger to her lips. The man retreated a few steps

into the shadow and she followed, her white dress marking her.

With an imperative gesture he held out a great black hand and she saw a bit of white caught between the fingers. She took it, wondering. It was a small square of paper folded many times. In the light of the doorway it would be possible to read what the message contained; she hurried across the court and up the low, broad steps to the door. Guardedly, she unfolded the paper. It was not from John. The cursive shaded letters were very different from his blunt and harsh penmanship. The note was in French and it was signed "A Friend."

One who dares not openly assist begs you to believe that effort will be made to secure the freedom of our mutual friend who is safe, but in captivity.

Once again Virginie read the brief message; then she thrust the paper in her bosom and walked with affected slowness back to the place where she had received it. There was no one there. Although she could see only a few feet ahead, she knew that the messenger was gone. As mysteriously as he had come, as silently had he disappeared.

So, then, Nicholas had not wholly lied to her. John Bush was alive and a prisoner somewhere. The realization made her feel weak. The suspense

was temporarily broken. For a little while, if only for a few hours, she could rest. How her body ached! How her eyes craved for sleep! The stone bench invited her, but she walked hurriedly by it and into the house. Were she to stop, she would collapse; perhaps faint.

Against the white wall behind her bed an ivory Christ hung from a cross of ebony, and on the hard boards at the bedside a small, white-clad figure trembled with the emotional outpouring of impetuous prayer. Beneath the sheer fabric of her nightdress her bare feet and ankles gleamed like satin in the candlelight. Through the open window came the sound of the night breeze rustling among the leaves of the mangoes.

To anyone familiar with the well-kept books of Monsieur Samatan, the writing in the note which Luke had thrust into Virginie's hand would have been easily recognizable. For, in fact, those few words of assurance had been penned by Monsieur Samatan not two hours before. Shortly after sunrise he had been awakened from his sleep by a low and persistent tapping on the door of his house. From a window, unseen, he had carefully examined this early caller and had recognized in the huge black the personal servant of John Bush, a negro on whose faithfulness and integrity the captain had often commented. Slinging a linen gown about

him, he unbarred the door and let Luke into the house, and watched the pantomime which followed in which the mute endeavoured to narrate the story of Captain Bush's capture and imprisonment. And it was this information that had led Monsieur Samatan, in the cool of the early morning, to confirm what he had conjectured and later to call in person on the unhappy Philadelphian in his cell in Fort Picolet.

There was much of the white man in the character of Monsieur Samatan. How far back had occurred the infusion of the white blood which lightened his cheeks no one knew, or bothered, for that matter, to calculate. Perhaps in the veins of the merchant there was a tinge of some royal family of France. A planter, of the nobility, the owner of one of the great estates that had once made a garden of the plain of Le Cap, had owned his grandmother. Probably that was the source of his light colour and particularly of the sharp, active brain beneath the close-cropped head.

Monsieur Samatan was rich. Furthermore, he was lucky. The gray-green scarab of his gold finger ring had come from Egypt, but to the superstitious negroes and men of colour the curious beetle possessed an unknown but sinister significance. It was a little thing, this bit of ancient carving, but in former years Dessalines had worn it, and men did not forget that death inevitably followed his accus-

ing finger, the finger always which wore the ring. It was the sign of death. So, without doubt, it was the guardian of the wealth of Monsieur Samatan, perhaps even more than he himself realized. No one had ever beaten him at a bargain, and never had he lacked the means to finance any transaction which promised profit. He was hard and cold, and yet he had a weakness ; there was in the world one man whose friendship he valued above all things. And the name of that man was John Bush.

So it was not without surprise that Monsieur Samatan learned of the captain's presence in Le Cap and it was with an interest more than casual that he uncovered the details of the misfortune into which the precipitate Quaker had projected himself. Monsieur Samatan was rich and his wealth was safely secured ; he had powerful friends among foreigners and on his hand he wore a ring of very particular significance. All of these things carried weight, not alone with his fellow-citizens of Le Cap, but with the "notables" and even with the all-powerful Christophe. Monsieur Samatan recognized these things ; they were factors valuable to him, but he was too sharp a trader to play his cards carelessly, too often or for a stake too small.

When he left the fort he had hurried to the Hôtel de la République and there in a far corner, a glass of wine at his elbow, was the man he sought,

Pierre Nicholas. The meeting was cordial, and after a second glass of fine Bordeaux, Monsieur Samatan stated his desire. It was that Nicholas should intervene and secure the life of Captain Bush. The request was based on a statement eloquently expounded of the friendship existing between himself and the Philadelphian. Humbly Monsieur Samatan implored the intercession of the friend of the King. No mention was made of a sum of gold long since borrowed by Nicholas from the thrifty merchant, or of the interest now due and perhaps none too convenient to be met. Nor was the green scarab mentioned, although it was the ring hand with which Monsieur Samatan most frequently lifted his glass.

It was very evident that Pierre Nicholas did not welcome the proposal with pleasure. John Bush, a very irritating thorn in his flesh, had been, or was soon to be, disposed of in a manner that was final and satisfactory. It was annoying to have to change plans already definitely arranged. It was also annoying to contemplate the possible continued activities of this extremely fearless and foolhardy American.

The name of Virginie was not mentioned. The question of the reprieve of the prisoner revolved entirely on principles of justice and politics. In every instance the argument would favour Nicholas. Monsieur Samatan, as a loyal citizen, could not

but agree at the impropriety of his own proposal. White men were not wanted ; fire and massacre had not long before registered the black man's wishes in the matter. L'Ouverture, Dessalines, and now Christophe had fought to break the rule of the foreigner, to conserve San Domingo for the negro. And so, it seemed highly improper that this white man should be permitted to run wild and unreproved. Monsieur Samatan hinted at the possible effect on the United States of the summary execution of an American citizen, but Nicholas smiled with gracious toleration at the jest. So long as England continued at war with the young republic the life of an occasional citizen would never be missed. Monsieur Samatan agreed ; and, agreeing, he again lifted the ring hand with a health to his companion. It was but a whim, this desire of his that John Bush should live. Perhaps on that ground alone Captain Nicholas would give his aid. But now behind the heavy, pallid face of Nicholas a thought was suggesting interesting possibilities. Sooner or later he must yield to Monsieur Samatan's wishes ; the debt necessitated that ; the green bug was already unpleasantly affecting him. But if he must yield, why could he not capitalize his magnanimity with Virginie? She need not know that other motives influenced him. The thought enticed him. He was already eager to be off to the house of Monsieur Mangan to test its effect.

"It is a pleasure," he answered the merchant abruptly, "to be able to render so insignificant a service. I have already given orders that this Bush be shot at sunset, but I can easily change the sentence. What would you have done with him?"

Monsieur Samatan thought for a minute. With his left hand he absently moved his glass on the wet table-top, describing a series of moist circles. From the corner of his eye, Nicholas furtively followed the gyrations of the beetle. Sincerely he wished that the interview might terminate.

"They are sending prisoners to work on the citadel, eh?" Monsieur Samatan finally queried.

Nicholas was surprised. He had anticipated that the merchant would propose giving Bush passage on some outgoing vessel, or at the worst a continued imprisonment in Fort Picolet. Prisoners employed at the citadel died off with appalling rapidity; a sentence to that work was not much more than a death sentence deferred.

"It shall be as you suggest," he agreed. He was anxious to end the interview. He pushed back his chair indicatively.

Monsieur Samatan got up bowing; profuse in his expressions of gratitude. Together they walked to the door.

On his return to his house Monsieur Samatan despatched Luke to carry to Virginie a message

of encouragement. The presence of Luke in Le Cap would excite no interest or suspicion. His inability to speak protected him; it would be presumed that he had come in from another part of the island. He explained this to Luke with much gesticulation, and the big black nodded his understanding.

Once again, in the evening, he dispatched the negro with a written message confirming Bush's safety. The next step would be more difficult. In the quiet darkness of his house he considered how he would proceed. Then with a plan half-formed, he blew out the candles and went to bed. And while he slept the object of his solicitations stumbled along the rough road that led south from Le Cap toward the citadel, a dark figure, manacled, footsore, and wearied to the point of almost complete exhaustion.

Never could Bush forget the experience of that terrible night; a stretch of interminable hours punctuated here and there by vivid and unforgettable incidents. Trivial incidents, in a sense, they were, pictures flashing out of the luminous night, a fire burning back among banana-trees, the liquid booming of drums, a dead man lying across the road, a patch of moonshine on the ruined wall of a sugar-mill. Like a continuous stream life flowed down the highway toward Le Cap. All the world seemed journeying to the

city, a black world, bare feet white with dust padding silently, men and women, their burdens balanced on their heads. Occasionally a straggling squad of soldiers passed them, their guns carried at every angle, their feet also bare and floured with dust. Sound filled the night, the gentle musical voices of pedestrians, the roadside noises of cocks crowing, the distant tumping of drums, a sad, plaintive singing, sweet and distant. The air was resonant; the world seemed filled with life.

They marched slowly, for the guards were showing no desire unduly to exert themselves, but Bush was exhausted before they had left the outskirts of the city; his feet were sore and swollen; his whole body ached; his head throbbed with dull, continuous pain. No one spoke. At his side, ahead and behind, the other prisoners plodded doggedly. Manacles clinked monotonously.

It was midnight when the first halt was made, and the men threw themselves on the dry, hot earth at the roadside, too exhausted even to seek the relative softness of the grass a few yards beyond.

One of the guards touched Bush with his gun muzzle. "*De l'eau?*" he questioned.

Water! The sound of the word revived him. With a weariness that was almost agony, he

stumbled to his feet. On the other side of the road a stone-lined ditch ran for a little distance parallel with the highway. It was a relic of some irrigating system of the French days, a substantial channel to conduct water from a mountain stream to the level plain. In the moonlight the water glistened smooth and eddyless ; breaks and obstructions had checked its flow. Greedily he cupped the water to his mouth ; it was warm and flat and it had a slimy taste of growing things, but it eased his throat.

For perhaps two hours they slept, flung limp and lifeless on the ground. Then the prodding gun muzzles awakened them. Groaning and muttering strange vileness, the prisoners got to their feet and found the road. The clinking manacles resumed their monotonous theme.

There was an enervated dampness in the air. Like white clouds the night mist hung over the plain. For long spaces the air would be sharp and clear ; then the mist would dim the starlight and the darkness would become chill and tangible.

Dawn was paling the night and the smaller stars were disappearing from the sky when the second halt was called, and again they dropped almost where they stood into a stupor of sleep. When John Bush again became conscious, the sun was flaming hot in his upturned face and his

body glowed with heat. From panniers at his saddle, the officer had taken a ration of coarse bread and a large hard cake was doled out to each of the men. They ate crouched on their haunches and washed down the dry particles with water from a stagnant pool at the roadside.

The food and water refreshed Bush and his sleep had relieved the pain behind his temples. With a characteristic revival of interest he looked around him. Ahead and high against the sky the mountains piled up their smooth blue-green undulations straight from the plain; rounded peaks and crests two or three thousand feet against the blue of the morning sky. White and glaring, the road swung by their resting-place, appearing and ending on either hand in the varying green of tropic foliage. Again he studied the mountain. On a sheer peak on the right a white block of stone seemed superimposed on the very summit. Distinct through the clear air he could see it as though through a spyglass. It was the citadel, that tremendous fortress which, under the direction of English engineers, was nearing completion for the King Christophe. A hundred, and in some places two or three hundred feet, the abrupt walls of masonry towered against the sky. Black squares in long lines indicated ports for the cannon that Christophe had secured for its defence. And in the centre, Bush could see higher towers and

parapets uprearing from the mass, a final pinnacle against the sky.

But now the road began to twist on a slightly increasing grade among the low foothills. Slowly the march had been resumed; slowly the little band of prisoners and their guards toiled forward. Black faces were white with dust save where rivulets from sweating brows had coursed black gleaming lines. The guards, wearied and irritable, lagged in the rear, occasionally prodding the hindmost prisoner with a bayonet or urging all forward with a curse. A band of officers, couriers from the palace of the King, passed them; gold-encrusted uniforms sparkling in the sunlight and silver chains and spurs clinking sweetly. The uniforms flared gorgeously against the green, and their black faces seemed very black beneath their brazen helmets. The prisoners crowded to the roadside to let them pass, heads bowed and eyes downcast before this evidence of the power and magnificence of the despotic King.

It was mid-afternoon and the more frequent huts along the road indicated that they were entering the town of Millot. Now and then Bush caught sight of ruined villas or sugar-mills among the trees. High gateposts of finely carved stone marked the entrances. Here in former days the French had cultivated their vast estates from these splendid dwellings; slaves by the hundred

thousand had tilled the rich soil irrigated with water led down from the hills. Sugar, rum, coffee, and all the produce of the tropics yielded wealth immeasurable. A third of the income of all of France came from the island soil. Each year the linen of the royal court was carried across the broad Atlantic to be bleached to snowy whiteness in the San Domingo sunshine. Here had been life with all the wealth and splendour and indolence and viciousness of the capitals of Europe, blended with the golden sunshine. Here had been song and laughter, culture and beauty. And then, up through the thin crust of an effete civilization, had been thrust a gaunt black hand. Toussaint L'Ouverture had led the revolt and died finally in a prison in far-off France. Then the dykes that held in check the human flood burst open. Fire came with sword. Terror by day, and by night horror indescribable. Lust, cruelty, and hatred swept before their savage rush the implanted civilization, and looted villas flamed far into the night. The black hordes reigned. The revolution of the slaves had triumphed.

And so it was that, as John Bush tramped doggedly along the broad road in the heavy heat of the late afternoon, his thoughts turned back to those other days of which he had heard so much, and a feeling of sadness oppressed him. The savage history of the years that intervened since

the revolution recurred to him. Again and again the untrained armies of black patriots had risen against French and English invaders. Again and again Le Cap Française had lighted the night skies with the glare of her burning buildings. Napoleon's picked veterans had finally abandoned the vain attempt to subdue an aroused people. Dessalines, following the patriot Toussaint, had become Emperor. He was assassinated, and now Christophe ruled, a King. In Port au Prince in the south, Pétion disputed Christophe's title, and a constant war existed. In the brain of Christophe there was fear ; an unescapable fear of that death which had become so frequent an event in the land he ruled. And so he was now completing his impregnable fortress, where, if came the need, he could withstand his enemies.

In the quick twilight John Bush saw the glory of Millot. Wide and grassy the broad central street opened from the winding road. Ahead the mountains cut a dark silhouette against the saffron sky of sunset. Everywhere among the houses were graceful palms and other tropic trees of darker green. From rich gardens came the intense colour of the bougainvillea and the flamboyant. Banana-trees drooped giant fronds over ruined walls. There was a stir of life everywhere. Men and women moved incessantly up and down and across the wide way. The air, so still and

clear, seemed to reflect the sound of limpid French words, the sweet notes of a song, the jingle of silver-mounted harness. Bright-coloured uniforms made spots of vivid colour among the white garments of the common people. All was life, and serenity and beauty. But, footsore and weary, the little band of prisoners stumbled along the rutted greensward unnoticing.

There were cries and a smart tinkling of bells. Four white horses, their shining harness heavily ornamented with silver, came at a fast trot down the street. Behind them, pivoting on long leather springs, was a French chariot. Outriders in crimson livery mounted the off-horses; on a high seat behind the chariot rode two black footmen, arms folded, also in livery of crimson. And in the soft cushions of the deep seat lolled a woman of perhaps forty years, a dark mulatto, dressed in the elegance of the latest Parisian fashion, the Queen of King Henri Christophe.

The prisoners huddled at the roadside while the carriage passed. With curiosity dulled by infinite fatigue, Bush watched it disappear into the soft cloud of dust that rose from the horses' hoofs. More slowly they proceeded again. Their destination now at hand, the guards no longer pressed them forward. Then, at the end of the street, Bush saw the palace, and in spite of his weariness

its unexpected magnificence absorbed his attention. On the left the dome of a low building rose among the palm-trees. To the right of it a gateway, flanked by five lofty columns of stone, terminated the street. And beyond the entrance on a high terrace formed by a long level hill was the palace of the King, a tremendous château of French architecture, four stories high, surrounded by a garden of indescribable splendour.

Like a man drugged, Bush slept that night on the earth floor of a thatched building on the outskirts of the town. Sleep came slowly, for, although he was now freed of the manacles, his wrists ached and his feet and legs were swollen with walking. All about him on the floor lay his companions, black bundles of rags from which now and then a tossing arm swung in sleep in the gleams of moonlight that fell white and clear through crevices in the roof. Through his tired brain the succession of past events marched again and again in interminable succession. He felt the swinging deck of the brig beneath his feet; he saw the honest face of Huggett, the shining ebony countenance of Luke; he saw Nicholas's sneering lips and small dark eyes peering at him; he saw Leroy Mangan cold and inimical; and then he felt the moist, warm lips of Virginie; he felt his arms around her yielding body; and with

a tremor he aroused from his half-sleep to see again the moonlight beams and the tossing forms of the sleeping men.

The dew was heavy on the grass. Some parrots fled screaming in level flight from a copse of banana-trees. The light was clear and mellow with dawning day. Along the worn and rutted road behind the sleeping palace they marched in straggling file, a hundred and more prisoners, black, mulatto, a quadroon, and one white man, John Bush. At the roadside were the brickyards where for years had been made the red firebrick for the citadel. Everywhere were the cabins of the workers and huge barracks where the prisoners were quartered. And among the buildings the white boles of the palm-trees reared immaculate to their clustering fronds.

The road wound in and out among ravines and gullies. Streams of sparkling water gurgled down over shallow fords, the broken rivulets glittering in the sunshine. Steadily it climbed the side of the mountain, and at each turn a new view of the valley was disclosed, a vista of green-clad hills and a great wedge of azure sky between.

They halted on a level stretch. Lashed to massive carriages with solid wooden wheels a half-dozen bronze cannon lined the roadside. With his eyes Bush measured their bulk; their weight was enormous. They were guns of the greatest size

from a ship-of-the-line, or perhaps siege guns purchased from the French, guns that had spoken at the bidding of Napoleon before the walls of some invested city.

The prisoners were divided into squads. In and out among them a dozen petty officers of the King, burly blacks in sweat-stained uniforms, bustled officiously. All of the soldiers were armed with brass-mounted flintlock pistols and sidearms, and each carried in his hand a lithe whip tipped with a bit of sharp iron. Loud and strangely discordant their vituperative orders rose above the steady purling sound of the stream. Like animals, the men dumbly obeyed them ; their black faces mutely regarding their captors.

In the middle of a long double line of men harnessed to the traces attached to the foremost gun, Bush found himself. Came the sharp order to start. Slowly the black shoulders bent against the inert mass behind. From corded necks strained muscles appeared like twisted rope ; beneath the glistening black skin of broad backs the lacing sinews stood out taut, as the resistance of the tremendous weight flexed the struggling bodies.

"Allons!" The long whips cracked smartly. On the shoulders of the man before him Bush saw the black skin open beneath the lash into a red gash from which the tiny drops of crimson trickled like sweat.

"*Allons!*" Their feet pawing the hard clay, their hands hot with the friction of the rope, they struggled to break into motion the heavy gun.

A negro in stained red trousers tucked into high boots of Spanish leather galloped up and down the line on his horse and screamed invectives at the straining men under whose concerted urge the wooden wheels of the carriage squealed finally into life, and slowly for a dozen yards the gun moved heavily along the road. Then a cross-rut intervened and the broad backs doubled in futile effort.

There was the heavy report of a pistol. With a dramatic gesture the soldier lifted the smoking barrel above his head. In the road the leader of the gang writhed for a moment, and then stretched stiffly with a convulsive tremor beneath the feet of the man behind him, his temple shattered by the leaden ball.

"Pull!" shouted the negro. "Pull, or I kill the next man, too." He took a second pistol from his belt.

With the terror of death driving them, the long line of taut bodies leaned against the traces. Once more the greased wheels of the gun carriage protested as they turned. The gun was going forward. The road dipped slightly. A momentum was attained. With a rush they gained the succeeding

slope. At the end of each ascent there was a brief rest ; then the next incline was taken.

At the head of the traces a slender negro sank moaning in the road. For two terrible hours they had laboured. There was not a back except Bush's that was not torn and bloody from the task ; hands were burned with pulling on the ropes ; there were angry chafes across every breast from the rope harnesses. For some reason the men in command had left Bush alone, but their faces carried no indications of friendliness. The other prisoners they seemed to regard as beasts to be flogged into activity. In the white man, mysteriously condemned to this unusual punishment, there was something more than they could understand. Hating him, they spared him because fear dictated.

The mounted soldier in the Spanish boots rode to the fallen man.

"Get up and work!" He regarded the thin breast of the black rise and fall as he lay, eyes fixed and staring, in the dust.

"Up!" he repeated. "Eh? You will not?" The man had not stirred. "Then this is for the rest to be a lesson. You do not work, so you do not live." The pistol roared and the jaded horse side-stepped at the sound. In the road the man lay as before, only now the pinched breast had ceased abruptly to heave and from a spot beneath the shoulder the blood gushed profusely.

They stood panting and resting on a level terrace. Far below extended the green foothills, clear green in every shade ; pale yellow-green clumps of bamboo mingled with the olive-green of the mahoganies. Off beyond the hills lay the wide plain, bright in the afternoon light, and close against the distant horizon was a gleaming bar of blue that was the sea. South, the once volcanic mountains of the interior were piled like a crumpled mass of paper, blue, ominous, impenetrable. A sweet, cool breeze rustled the high guinea grass and slapped the banana fronds. It was a scene of such peaceful beauty that Bush for the moment forgot his weariness and bleeding hands. Then he heard the heavy breathing of the man beside him ; another, crouched in front of the gun carriage, groaned audibly. Again he became conscious of his immediate surroundings, of his aching body, of his miserable companions.

The edge of the road dropped away abruptly in a precipice of two or three hundred feet. Standing near the edge, he peered over into the depth. Down beneath the sheer wall of rock was the thatched roof of a native hut ; a thread of soft gray smoke rose from it in the sheltered air ; there was the sound of voices, clear but very distant.

His eyes wandered to the man who laboured at the traces just in front of him, he whose back had been so cruelly scarred by the vicious iron-tipped lash. He was crouched on the ground, staring off

into the limitless distance through small, dark-yellow eyes. He was a negro of powerful build, an enormous man with finely moulded limbs, but the head was small and round, and there was an expression of hate in the coarse features of the face. Conscious of the stare of the white man, the black shifted his eyes toward him; there was a malevolent glare in the small eyes, a snarl on the thick red lips.

Behind them and below, a bugle cut the stillness with three thin rising notes. In an instant the soldiers were on their feet. The officer on his horse waved his sword wildly above his head in a frenzy of excitement.

"Back!" he shouted, riding at the prisoners who had flung themselves along the road when the order to halt had been given. "Back! The King comes!"

Whips sang in the air. Wickedly the lithe thongs snicked against human flesh. Before the onset of the guards the men crowded against the cliff, leaving clear between them and the precipice the narrow road. Again the bugle sounded, nearer and louder came the ascending notes. On his horse the black officer plumed himself, a soiled lace handkerchief in one hand, in the other his naked sword. With a semblance of military order, the soldiers stood at attention, their backs to the clustered prisoners.

Hoofs sounded and there was the sound of harnesses. Again came the bugle notes. With his bodyguard, Henri Christophe, King of San Domingo, was mounting the steep mountain-side to visit his fortress on the peak, that fortress which he had commissioned to be made the most impregnable in the world, the stronghold from which he defied his enemy of the south, a citadel now completed except for the placing of the great guns which slaves and prisoners were dragging day after day up from the valley at its foot.

Like a mythical being Christophe had always been to the Philadelphian from the day of his first voyage to Le Cap. Throughout the island it was the King whose name recurred most frequently in every conversation. He was a hero, the saviour of the country, an invincible and magnificent monarch at whose touch the armies of the great white war-loving nations faded as the mists over the plains melted before the rising sun. Once a waiter in a tavern in Le Cap, this uneducated black by his inherent genius had become the leading general of his predecessor, and when an assassin had struck down Dessalines it was General Christophe who had become President and later by his own edict King of San Domingo.

Bush recalled fleeting fragments of the countless anecdotes he had heard of him. To his subjects the ruthless King was a demigod. With the

characteristic tendency of a simple people, his tyrannic power had won for him a mute affection. They boasted of his cruelty, of his bloody revenges, of his mad licentiousness. And yet through all the sequence of anecdotes were occasional instances of rude justice and of rewards justly given for faithful service. By the rule of fear Christophe was King, but there was another side to his nature that infrequently gave itself expression.

Up the incline came the foremost of the King's escort. Their black horses were lathered with sweat; foam clung like froth to their champed bits. Polished brass and silver shone in the sunlight. They were in the ornate uniform of the King's bodyguard; tall, thin-hipped, broad-chested men who rode their horses like centaurs. Eight, Bush counted, riding in a single file. They passed with only a casual glance at the prisoners and a bare recognition of the self-conscious officer who sat on his horse at a fixed salute, the sweat coursing in shining rivulets down his face.

There was a little space behind the last horseman. Then over the crest came a huge white horse magnificently caparisoned and on its back rode a man whom Bush instantly knew must be the King. He was a full-blooded negro of middle age and of medium height, for his stirrups were drawn high against the crimson saddle-cloth. Lolling easily in his saddle, his massive body swayed with the

horse's gait. But it was not the graceless body or the broad face that held Bush's attention, although the face was one that once seen was impossible ever to be forgotten. Beneath a wide-brimmed velvet hat encrusted with gold and ornamented with a tuft of snowy aigrets, Bush saw a pair of black eyes that moved with a nervous rapidity in contrast to the gross inactivity of the heavy body; the whites of the eyes were prominent and intensified the blackness of the pupils. They were eyes in which could be read all of those characteristics that had made Christophe the hero of a thousand tales. In them was boldness, vanity, cruelty, and fear. Uneasily they shifted as though they feared the fidelity of the men of his own bodyguard. Then they fell on John Bush, and for an uneasy instant the two men regarded each other with mutual interest and surprise. In that brief period Bush also saw the wide cheeks and the heavy sensuous mouth, thick lips parted from large white teeth. It was a gross, bestial face, but the eyes so dominated it that the other features at first glance passed unnoticed.

There was another space behind the King and then at a considerable distance the rearguard came into view as they mounted the rise in the road. Directly opposite the prisoners Christophe reined in his horse and with evident satisfaction regarded the gun lashed to its crude carriage. Slowly his eyes

shifted from the huddled men to the broad panorama of the green valley and the distant plain of Le Cap. In the stillness Bush could hear the white horse pant heavily; he could hear the sound of the approaching rearguard as hoofs clicked on stones. Then directly beside him Bush saw the body of the negro who had toiled ahead of him, the man who only a few minutes before had turned a face filled with hate and passion, crouch as though to spring. It was the movement of a tiger, a movement that he did not comprehend. In a flash the realization of the purpose of this lithe, straining creature just in front of him came to him. He saw the body lean forward, poised on bent, black fingers, the bare feet working a firm toe-hold in the road. With a strange apathy he watched the muscles of the half-bare back tighten until the contracting flesh started again the trickle of blood drops from the dust-caked cuts left by the merciless lash. Cautiously the round black head lifted and the yellow eyes stared fixedly before him. Bush followed their gaze.

Sitting on the white horse, the King wiped the sweat from his forehead with a bit of gaudy yellow silk. He had taken off the velvet hat and uncovered the mass of crinkly black hair that was brushed back from his brow and gathered in a tight queue tied with a black ribbon at his neck. From his comfortable saddle Christophe gazed off through

the twilight, and, perhaps to gain a better view, he edged the horse slightly over toward the rim of the precipice. It was a striking picture against the back drop of the sky: the superb animal, the magnificent equipment, and the powerful figure of the negro gazing off across his domain.

The body of the crouching black drew back slightly for a spring. On the brink the King, unaware of danger, continued to feed his eyes on the distant scene. Then, as though impelled by some subtle and intuitive force, he turned his head abruptly. The cruel, penetrating eyes met the glare of the crouching negro. His hand shot to his belt. It was too late.

As though flung from a catapult, the prisoner leaped from the road. There was no one between him and his prey. One blow from that hurtling body, and horse and rider would perhaps be flung into the void. In the brain of the assassin consequences undoubtedly were unconsidered; better, perhaps, that he, too, might fall spinning and turning through the limpid air than to die later at the hands of the King's bodyguard.

There was no motive or thought that prompted Bush's action. It was the instinctive act of a man prepared by stern training in daily emergencies to act on impulse. Possibly history might have been better served if he had remained passive and watched this terrible episode without inter-

ference. But that did not happen. The whole act had been a matter of seconds. Unreasoning, instinctively, as the prisoner sprang at Christophe, Bush leaped simultaneously; and as the negro flung past him he caught in midair the legs of the man and crashed with him on the road.

With maddened strength the negro struggled to tear himself loose from the binding arms of the white man. Writhing and turning, the two twisted on the rough stones. Through the dust Bush saw the pinkish palm of a hand reaching for his throat. A pistol thundered in his ears; acrid smoke stifled him. In his clenched arms the body of the negro struggled with a final effort that nearly tore him loose, then he felt the strength flow from the giant frame like water from a punctured skin. Heavily the man rolled limp on his side. From beneath the dead weight of the body Bush pulled his entwined arms and sat up, dully looking about him, his head still ringing with the pistol's detonation.

Unmoved, Christophe looked down at him from his saddle, a pistol smoking in his hand. Already the King's bodyguard had leaped from their horses and were gathered about him. With a long sword one of the men pricked the breast of the dead man; no tremor of animation greeted the thrust. Stiffly Bush got to his feet. There was a sudden excited flood of voices; men until that moment silent through tension gave tongue to pent-up

emotion. But silently Christophe regarded John Bush, his unflinching eyes appraising the white man, his thick red lips slightly drawn back from his strong white teeth.

Fearlessly Bush met the gaze of the King. No line or movement of the broad black face indicated what might be passing through Christophe's mind. Only the parted lips suggested a friendly recognition of the impulsive act.

"What are you doing here?" Christophe spoke in a hard, throaty voice, enunciating each word with distinct native accent. It was not the French of Nicholas, or Mangan, but the French of the San Domingo slave.

"I am a prisoner, Your Majesty." There was a drawl in the inflection and the corners of Bush's blue eyes suggested a smile as he spoke the word "prisoner."

"A prisoner?" Christophe seemed to ponder for an explanation. "It is not usual for me to see white prisoners here. You are an American?"

Bush nodded. "I am a Philadelphian."

Behind the broad black forehead of Christophe thoughts seemed to be struggling for expression. Then his eyes turned to the dead man in the road. He waved his hand expressively toward the cliff. At the sign, the officer in command of the prisoners was seized with feverish activity. A dozen orders poured from his lips where one

would have been sufficient. Whips sang through the air in punctuation. The body of the would-be assassin was lifted from the road. There was a sharp final command and it fell turning slowly over and over, arms and legs flapping loosely, down toward the distant tree-tops. Perhaps there was something in the sight of that falling object that crystallized the thoughts of the King. Had it not been for the quick act of this white man, he, Henri Christophe, might now be lying a broken thing beneath the trees. A King by virtue of life, but a sudden thrust, and he, Christophe, would be no more than the mangled carcass of the slave. Perhaps such was the train of thought that possessed him; the hard eyes softened a little, the parted lips broadened to a smile.

Again Christophe turned toward Bush, who stood silently watching the slowly changing expression of the King's face.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"A number of unfortunate circumstances, Your Majesty. Some actions of mine, although well-intentioned, have brought down on me the enmity of several of your subjects."

"You are a man of education?"

Bush bowed gravely.

"Possibly you have had the command of men?"

"For the better part of my life I have commanded men. The brig of which I was both captain and part owner was but recently sunk as the result of a skirmish with an English frigate." Again the black face reflected the slowly working mind. "Your name?"

"John Bush, Your Majesty." The repetition of the title was not without its effect. Again the strong white teeth gleamed between parted lips.

"Captain Michel!" An officer on a black horse at the King's side saluted. "This man goes to the citadel with me. He is pardoned." Christophe turned to Bush. "Your offences were serious, perhaps?" he questioned.

"Not murder or a crime against the State." The blue eyes seemed to demand respect; to defy a further questioning.

"Bah!" Christophe waved a square black hand, thick fingers heavy with gold rings encrusted with jewels. "What is a life worth unless it is the life of the King or of one whom the King regards with favour? I pardon you, John Bush. I do not ask your offence. It is a reward that I give you for the service you have rendered to the King. But there is further service that you can do for me. I shall not forget. I reward. Captain Michel! A horse for Monsieur Bush. There is a horse." He pointed at the red-clad officer who sat at respectful attention in front of the prisoners,

the officer who not a quarter of an hour before had cursed the white man who struggled at the traces, the white man who now, by this sudden reversal of fortune, was elevated from a prisoner to the very presence of the King. With alacrity he scrambled down from his mount and came forward, the bridle in his hand. He was abject in servility, but in his lowered eyes Bush caught a glance that indicated the resentment that his involuntary sacrifice inspired.

So it happened that once again John Bush found himself plucked from the veritable depths of despair and placed in a position from which he could survey the possibilities of the future with reasonable hope and equanimity. With characteristic light-heartedness he fell instantly into the spirit of the new adventure and began mentally to cast about to determine what possibilities it afforded. It had been on his tongue to ask Christophe for his safe-conduct to Le Cap, but his intuition told him that another motive than mere gratitude had prompted the King's action. Undoubtedly he believed that the young American could be of further and valuable service to him. What that service might be, Bush did not attempt even to imagine. The court of Christophe teemed with men imported from every capital of Europe to assist him in the rule of his black subjects, men who for the most part contributed more largely from a knowledge of the vices of civilization than from a familiarity with those virtues which alone can create through a just and enlightened ruler a happy and prosperous people. Undoubtedly in

John Bush, Christophe had sensed a man who might be serviceable to him. The future would disclose the answer.

There was another reason why Bush had hesitated to plead for immediate freedom. In Leroy Mangan and Pierre Nicholas he recognized enemies of not insignificant character. Both stood high in Christophe's favour. There had as yet been no mention of names. If Christophe realized that it was the displeasure of these two men that Bush had incurred, the case might well be altered. Sooner or later he would learn of it, but for the immediate present Bush would be safe, and what was of greater importance to him, he would be in a position to attempt again an escape with Virginie.

So it was that his resilient disposition responded to this unexpected trick of fortune with a flood of high spirits, and again he was planning his next move almost as soon as he had swung himself into the saddle of his late captor.

A sorry figure was John Bush in this new company. Half-naked, barefooted, and gray with dust, he rode surrounded by the very flower of the officers of the King. Polished metal sparkled; gay coats flamed against the green of the roadside. The spirited black horses completed the contrast. Only in his face could be seen that which rags nor dust could never conceal. Among

his companions he rode, a man who demanded recognition, a gentleman.

The horses climbed. At times the ascent was steep, but the long inclines were well surveyed, and although they mounted steadily the grades for the most part were not arduous.

For the first time Bush found opportunity to look around him. Although he rode now a privileged character in the midst of the King's men, there was no converse between them. In their eyes, he realized, he was still a prisoner relieved from menial servitude to a more agreeable but none the less hazardous position in the household of the King. And so there was time for thinking and an opportunity to study the astounding setting of this mountain fortress.

Although the peak on which the citadel was constructed rose on the north almost from the plain of Le Cap, an outpost of the towering group of ranges that formed the central portion of the island, the approach followed the less sheer side of the mountain on the south. In the mouth of a pleasant valley Millot faced the plain, its back to the rugged heights. And up from Millot on that southern face the road to the citadel had been cut back and forth, ever ascending to the three-thousand-foot pinnacle. The road in itself was a marvellous work of engineering, a work that had required a year of the labour of thousands

of enslaved freedmen before a single stone could be hauled over it up from the quarries beneath, or a load of brick from the long avenue of kilns in the town of Millot.

The road swung a wide curve. Faint wisps of chill, damp cloud shredded past them on the breeze from the sea. The sun had set. The evening light was sharp and clear. Bush looked up. Above like the bow of a huge ship a narrow prow of smooth white masonry cut out over the very side of the mountain, a sheer perpendicular wall of stone a hundred feet in height that commanded from its battlements the tortuous approach, the entire southern side of the mountain and the distant valley at its foot.

The horses trotted into a level area in the shadow of the fortifications. Everywhere were piles of brick and chiselled stone, planks and heavy beams of oak and mahogany, white heaps of lime and the shelters of the artisans. Perpendicular above them rose the walls of the citadel, a tremendous face of brick and stone pierced with interminable rows of gun ports, row upon row to the summit of the walls.

Around the foot of the prow they rode on a narrow graded path. Another level platform opened and above it was the south wall of the citadel flanked to the east and west by the towering turrets. A row of light field guns com-

manded the approach. The bare earth of the platform was crowded with tethered horses; piles of saddles and equipment. Everywhere were the black soldiers and officers of the King.

Through iron-studded doors of oak they entered the base of the eastern tower. Soldiers had taken their horses. On foot they passed under the high stone lintel. Inside it was dark, and from the galleries a chill wind blew steadily and made Bush conscious of his wet and heated body. In iron braziers inset in the stone tawny flames of oil-soaked wood accentuated the gloom. Up broad stone stairs, turning steadily they mounted. At each landing Bush had a glimpse of long black torch-lit galleries receding into the gloom. Everywhere there was the sound of voices and of footsteps. The vast fortification teemed with life.

From an upper landing they turned into a cavernous corridor and then through a door into an open court. Above, the first stars were faintly flickering, pin-points of white in the luminous sky, that flooded the court with a soft radiance. On all four sides rose the battlements of the citadel completely enclosing the spacious area. It was the heart of the fortress, the inner fastness of Christophe's impregnable retreat.

Had John Bush been able at that moment to gaze north from the citadel across the plain of

Le Cap three thousand feet below to the distant sea, he would have seen the solitary peak of Le Morne against the pale horizon and at its eastern foot the twinkling lights of Le Cap Française.

It was eight o'clock, and in the dining-room of Leroy Mangan a dozen candles in silver candlesticks gleamed on the white linen and sparkled in the polished glasses. In his dark green livery, old Lucien moved noiselessly about the table and with a hand that trembled poured the red wine from the decanter into the glass of Virginie.

She sat alone at the foot of the table. Opposite her, set as though he were expected to be present, was the place of Leroy Mangan. She looked beyond the empty chair. On the white wall in a heavy gilded frame the portrait of the Chevalier Mangan seemed to regard her. He was in armour and one bent arm supported his steel casque. The eyes, the white face, the mouth were unmistakable. Except for the dress of another century the face might be the face of the grandson which looked down at her. She averted her eyes. For the first time she felt a terror at the sight of that stern, forbidding countenance. Then she recalled the stark figure beneath the drawn sheet, the tall lean body, the white towel across the eyes.

The doctor had bled him again that evening and she had held the basin to catch the quick red spurt when the lancet pierced the flesh. Since then he

had felt better, but weak from the blood loss. She had not looked at his face when the doctor had lifted the cloth. The statement that the wound was healing sufficed her. In a few days Monsieur Mangan would be about again. But, with a gesture of distress, the doctor had added that his face would be marred. The thin straight nose had been broken. She glanced hurriedly at the portrait of the Chevalier as though she expected there to see the counterpart of the scar.

Her hand trembled slightly as she lifted the glass of claret to her lips. Monsieur Samatan had called a half-hour before; he was now in her guardian's room. She had been dismissed when he had entered, but she had stood for a few minutes outside the closed door. Somehow she knew that it was of John Bush that he was speaking, but she could not hear the words, only a tantalizing murmur, dull and unintelligible.

Monsieur Samatan, she realized, was a true friend of the captain's. Perhaps it was to plead his cause that the merchant had come to Mangan's bedside. Perhaps he would have a message for her. She would give him the opportunity to speak to her when he left.

Except for the promise which Pierre Nicholas had given to her, she had had no word of Bush since the day previous. Had Nicholas lied to her —and she felt scant confidence in his word —the

threat of her guardian might already have been carried into effect. In that case life would be over for her also. The keen stiletto that for years had rested in her guardian's cabinet was concealed beneath her pillow. That morning she had tested the sharp point against her white breast. A little thrust, a very little thrust; that would be all.

There were steps in the corridor. Monsieur Samatan was leaving. Stealthily she pushed back her chair and hurried through the drawing-room to intercept him at the door. They met in the dim light of a single candle on a console. Monsieur Samatan was immaculate in starched linen and a high white stock on which his black chin rested in startling contrast. He was agitated and pulled nervously at his long pointed moustache.

"Monsieur Samatan." Virginie spoke low and hurriedly. "Does he live? Is he safe?"

The merchant glanced over his shoulder down the dark corridor as though he feared to answer. "*Oui, mademoiselle.*" His voice was hardly more than a harsh whisper. "He lives; he is safe."

"Where is he? Tell me all. What has happened?"

Monsieur Samatan edged toward the door. "Monsieur Mangan forbids me to speak with you. He knew you would question me."

Virginie raised her voice slightly and there was a tinge of anger in her tone. "Monsieur Samatan,

you will answer me. You have claimed the friendship of Captain Bush. It would be his wish that you would tell me all."

"Do you doubt my desire to serve you, mademoiselle? Have I not twice already sent the dumb man with a message to you?" He walked slowly as he spoke through the door and Virginie followed. It was a lovely evening, and as they passed from the confines of the house the restraining influence seemed to fall from them.

"He is alive, mademoiselle," the merchant continued speaking more easily. "It was ordered that he was to be shot, but I persuaded Monsieur Nicholas to order a reprieve. There is a matter of some money between us, and Monsieur Nicholas was amiable."

"Where is Captain Bush now?" she interrupted.

Monsieur Samatan made a gesture of despair. "It is the only thing that could be done, mademoiselle; he is sent with the prisoners to the citadel."

She gave a little cry and covered her face with her hands as though to shut out the picture of her imagination.

"Oh, monsieur, death is as certain there. Would it not perhaps have been best had the good God taken him at once?" She was sobbing softly and her fingers were wet with tears. "Have I not seen them go, hundreds and hundreds every week

for years to die at that cruel work? Prisoners! Oh, monsieur, you must know they are slaves taken from their homes on any pretext to die for that beast who misrules this unhappy people."

Monsieur Samatan put his hand on her arm. "Hush! You must not speak so of the King. The trees are listening, and they will repeat. Your hasty words can only bring certain ruin to the man you would save."

"Can he be saved?"

"Perhaps. Monsieur Mangan does not know that he still lives. Later he will learn. Then perhaps you can win him to give his release, if he will leave here never to return."

"Captain Bush will not do what you suggest."

"Then, mademoiselle, what more can be done for him? I have gone further than even my position permits. I have saved his life and I shall still try to save him, but . . ."

A thought occurred to her. "Would Monsieur Nicholas have prevented the execution had you not talked with him as you did?"

Monsieur Samatan shook his head. "I do not mean to claim anything for myself, but Monsieur Nicholas desired his death. He had taken no steps to prevent it."

"Thank you, monsieur, for all that you have done. God will reward you."

She saw the white linen suit disappear in the

waiting carriage at the turn of the drive ; then she heard the horses' hoofs on the gravel and the grind of the wheels. Reluctantly she entered the house. In the hall old Lucien met her. Her dinner would be cold ; he did not know what had become of her. She dismissed him with a brief answer, and went immediately to her room. From its hiding-place she took out the thin sharp knife and again tested its point against her breast. He lived ! Yes, and he might some day return to her. But in five short days Nicholas would exact of her her promise. She thrust back the knife. At least a little time remained of life and hope. Then, if necessary, here would be her answer to Pierre Nicholas.

It was ten o'clock when Virginie finally flung herself on her bed and sank almost immediately into a sleep of exhaustion. And it was ten o'clock when John Bush, bathed and refreshed with food and wine, lay down to a troubled repose in a room in the private apartments of the King in the lofty citadel. And it was at this same hour of ten under the warm, starlit night that two men might have been seen walking steadily along the white and dusty highway which led from Le Cap Française to the town of Millot.

The night was warm and the enveloping darkness was fragrant, and filled with low, sweet sounds. It was such a night as John Bush had

experienced when he plodded along that same hard road but forty-eight hours ago, a usual tropic night, feminine and sensuous. In the starlight could be seen the travellers to the town, men and women, on foot or riding small donkeys ; men and women tall and graceful, the women bearing their burdens balanced on their heads ; black men and women, their faces lost against the darkness. From the thick, moist jungles of banana-trees came the constant sound of voices, sweet and plaintive voices singing strange, sad snatches of melody, songs of the Congo blended with songs of France. The dust stirred by the noiseless feet of the walkers hung like a night mist along the way. There was a creaking of laden panniers on the low broad backs of the donkeys. In the distance the drums beat with a hollow booming sound, the drums of Africa. All night that human tide would stream along the road to the city, but at midnight it would meet a counter-current ; they who had spent the day at the market would be returning.

But the human tide had not yet turned, and the two men who swung along at their steady pace overtook no other pedestrians. They were an ill-matched pair, for one was a negro of unusual height and intensity of colour, while the other was a white man, short, stocky, and with the tarred pigtail and varnished straw hat of a sailor. No

conversation passed between them, but occasionally the white man made some audible comment on the character of the country through which they were advancing, at which the black would nod vigorously, shaking his head until the wide brim of the woven palm hat flapped violently.

"Luke"—it was Huggett who spoke—"I think the captain must have found this a hard passage, beat up and out like he was."

The negro made a throaty sound and the hat-brim fanned his face.

"Must hev been two hours since we left that trader Samatan," Huggett continued. "White he is, sez I, if he be black. Eh, Luke, my man?"

Again the negro signified agreement. Huggett hitched at his waist and his fingers confirmed the presence of his sheathed knife inside the wide sash around his hips. Then he thrust his hand inside the open front of his shirt. Suspended from a piece of line around his neck a small package rested against his hairy chest.

"Samatan sure sets a heap of value on thet ring." His blunt fingers pinched the small package as he spoke. "Stone bug, thet's all it be, except there be magic in it."

The whites of Luke's eyes rolled excitedly and he made a gesture with his arm which Huggett either ignored or failed to recognize.

"Sez, if we gets on a lee shore and hard put to it, to open the package and show the ring, but on no account to give it to no one 'cept the captain, and to him the sooner the better."

Slowly twinkling constellations sank behind the black tree-tops. The stream of walkers which they had encountered had disappeared some hours past. Already the mountains rose, it seemed, almost before them. Hour after hour with unslackened pace they had pushed forward. Like an animal, the long-limbed negro walked slightly ahead of his companion, but Huggett's shorter stride showed no weakening, and although the sweat ran down his face there was no other indication of the hard night's journey behind them. Now dawn stood in the east.

The light of the new day had already touched the citadel when a bugle aroused Bush from his dreams. With a start he lifted himself on his elbow and looked about him. The small room still confined the gloom of night, but an azure light glowed in the high open door and through the stone casings he could catch a glimpse of sunlight and a tiny triangle of sky.

Carefully he reconstructed the amazing happenings of the evening past. His recollection of the citadel was one rather of general impression than of specific detail. He recalled the enormous size

of the structure, the towering walls, the vast stone galleries, then the spacious inner courtyard above which on four sides rose the uppermost battlements, and finally, on the northern edge of the mountain-top, built into the encircling walls, the magnificent apartments of the King. In the glow of blazing mahogany logs in the wide fireplace he saw again the black face of Christophe as he once more thanked him for the service he had given and dismissed him to his room. And now he found himself with the dawn of another day breaking, in his room in this lofty mountain fastness, if not a prisoner at least unable to follow the one desire that motivated his very action—his return to Le Cap.

Sitting on the edge of the bed he examined the clothing that one of the King's aides had brought in to him the night before. The high black leather boots were of French make and the white knee-breeches, from the fineness of the material, were obviously from the hands of some Parisian tailor. The coat was of crimson broadcloth lavishly encrusted with bullion and the shirt and stock were of the finest linen. It was the uniform of the King's personal guard.

Was it the intention of Christophe to hold him indefinitely? Carefully he considered his situation. Possibly this was simply an attempt to reward him for the act that he had performed. At all events,

he realized, he must not seem unappreciative of the honour tacitly conferred upon him. And at a suitable time he would plead for his release.

Then he saw again the leering face of Nicholas and heard his boast of the wedding day. The recollection galvanized him and he sat on the bedside trembling with a powerless fury. Two days had gone by; this was the morning of the third. Whatever might be done must be done instantly. There was no time to lose.

He dressed slowly, thinking meanwhile. To conceive a plan was impossible. Out of his present situation there seemed no loophole by which he might effect his own escape, much less the rescue of Virginie from the power of Pierre Nicholas. With a characteristic shrug of his shoulders, he thrust his arms into the crimson coat and looked down at himself. Could John Bush have viewed his lithe figure through another's eyes, the impression would not have been unpleasing. The borrowed clothing fitted him perfectly and the striking uniform became his blond colouring. He had washed and shaved at a small stand at the foot of the bedstead, and now for the first time in a period that seemed of a month's duration he felt physically ready to meet the unknown events of the coming day.

He strode to the door and looked out on the courtyard. In the morning light the enclosing

walls stood clearly outlined against the sky. In the wide space between the walls a squad of soldiers marched to relieve the guard. Crisp orders sounded, again the bugle called. From the battlements white spirals of smoke rose and bent on the light breeze. Smells, odorous of the kitchen, announced the preparation of the morning meal. From every side came the hum of voices, the sound of the picked hundreds from Christophe's armies who formed the guard of his mountain fortress.

There was a knock on the door. An orderly entered.

"Monsieur Bush?" he saluted as he spoke.

"It is I."

"The King requests your immediate presence."

They followed a short corridor and passed through a door into the circular room in which Bush had last seen the King on the evening before. The interior was as yet unfinished, for the white plaster walls were devoid of panelling or ornament. The ceiling was circular and rose to a dome that gave an exaggerated effect of height. On the highly polished floor a dozen gilt chairs were clustered in disorder around a large round table of yellow mahogany on which were piled maps, books, and a great clutter of papers of every description. A fire was burning in the hearth, although a warm air was already flooding

in from the courtyard through the open door. A pair of candles guttered with floating wicks in silver candlesticks on the richly carved mantelpiece.

Against the fireplace with his back to the hearth stood Christophe. His legs were spread slightly and his hands were caught together behind his back. He was quietly dressed in black knee-breeches and black silk stockings which seemed to emphasize the powerful muscular development of his legs, and his large flat feet were encased in low leather slippers with silver buckles. He wore a loose shirt of fine linen and the open throat disclosed the thick corded neck and powerful chest.

All these things Bush noticed in a sweeping glance, but it was always the face of Christophe that caught and held attention. Negro in its every characteristic, there was something in the low forehead, the penetrating eyes now defiant and now furtive, and the large sensuous mouth with its array of strong white teeth that made the face unforgettable. It was the face of a tyrant, merciless and cruel.

"You wear well the uniform of my favourites, monsieur." His voice was harsh, but there was evident in the tone a desire to express friendliness.

Bush bowed. "You do me much honour, Your

Majesty. May I ask what is to be your pleasure with me?"

Christophe's eyes narrowed slightly. "Yesterday, my young friend, you toiled with criminals and behold, like this"—he drew his hand from behind him and snapped his fingers—"I make you one of those who stand nearest to the King. Is it not perhaps unbecoming that you should express impatience regarding the future?"

"Your Majesty, I did not mean to offend. But it is only natural that an American citizen in the position in which I find myself should inquire as to his future." Bush stopped, for he saw that his words were more apt to create a situation unfavourable to his desires than a more discreet silence.

Steadily Christophe regarded him without speaking. From the courtyard came the sound of feet and the sharp order of command. The troops were at drill. Another order and musket butts clanked against the pavement.

"You can write well, eh?" Christophe spoke at last. "You are something of a scholar, perhaps?"

"I can write, yes, English and French. Of Spanish, a little."

"Yes? That is good. Paul Dulac, it is he who does those things for me; he is sick. Until he returns you will write for me."

With a flash Bush recalled the gossip he had so often heard of the illiteracy of the King. Formerly a waiter in one of the cafés of Le Cap, he had risen during the reign of his predecessor to the rank of General by the sheer virtue of his power of leadership, and on Dessalines' death had by that same domination brought about his own election to the presidency, an office which he had soon afterwards changed to that of King. In the rapid flight of his progress there had been no time for educational advancement. It was said that the waiter-King could neither read nor write. Certainly it was true that he had surrounded himself at his palace at Millot with at least a dozen men of learning who could cloak with their own erudition his mental deficiencies. Perhaps here also at the citadel there was need for someone who could aid him in carrying out the deception which must have seemed necessary to him. Perhaps it was only the necessity of a clerk or secretary that the King felt. The future would soon tell.

Christophe strode over to the table and tossed about the pile of papers. "You have eaten? No? Go now"—he pointed to the opposite door —"there is food there on the table. Then return. You shall read these and tell me what is of interest to me, and you shall write for me some orders."

He walked back to the fire and resumed his position, one hand now thrust in his shirt-front like a black Napoleon. And it is not unlikely that this attitude was one of conscious imitation, for the little Corsican war-lord of Europe had been always an ideal to his dusky imitator in the western hemisphere.

An hour had passed. Bush had breakfasted and returned to the circular office of the King. Before the fire, which had burned down to a little heap of white and faintly smoking ashes, Christophe still posed, a hand concealed beneath the soft white ruffles of the shirt-front. From time to time an orderly, posted outside the door which opened to the courtyard, entered and with a click of his heels and a smart salute announced the name of someone who would see the King. Although apparently occupied with the papers which cluttered the table, Bush watched with interest the man who posed before the fire. In the blue eyes of the American there was the scorn of intelligence for brute force, but unconscious of the reaction his pose was creating, the King still played his part with an equivalent scorn, perhaps, in his own eyes for this captive white. All who presented themselves were necessarily officers stationed at the citadel. Their reports were apparently daily affairs whenever the King was present, a personal contact by which Christophe intimately followed the operations of his armed

forces and under which the entire kingdom was operated. A tropic rainstorm the night before had caused a leak in the magazine and a barrel of powder had been dampened. Christophe personally was informed of the occurrence and of the fact that the powder was now drying in the sun. A short fat officer, whose gray grizzled beard hid the black skin beneath, reported a rumour of revolutionary talk among certain men at Limonade. The King's eyes narrowed to a slit and his lips bared the big white teeth. A company of fifty men would proceed at once. No one, however slightly suspected of the treason, should be allowed to escape. Their execution must be reported to him as quickly as possible. Followed another officer. Two sentries had slept at their post. Again the eyes of the King closed catlike; again the lips retreated from the pink gums. It was his expression indicating death. In curt rasping words the confirmation of their immediate execution followed. Constantly the sinister figure of death seemed to stand at the shoulder of the King. Instant execution was his prompt solution of every problem. His power was the fear of his subjects; and his symbol of might was the leaden bullet of the firing squad, or the assassin's knife.

The papers through which Bush had been wandering, his attention half-occupied by his interest in the conversation of Christophe, were of

a miscellaneous character; reports from various officers in charge of villages and districts, statements of taxes received and military disbursements, confidential communications containing reports of secret agents, and occasionally pleas for the mercy of the King from some high officer caught in the web of the espionage system which, next to the actual military forces, seemed to be the King's most potent arm of strength.

"Does Your Majesty desire to read any of these papers?" Bush inquired.

The eyes of Christophe rested heavily on him, but Bush met the stare with a look of bland innocence. The King waved aside the proffered papers Bush had selected.

"Later, my young friend, you may read to me whatever I should hear." He had relapsed into the native dialect which he invariably used when he talked familiarly, and the mongrel French words and pronunciation seemed to confirm his ignorance.

"Write," he commanded, "to Captain Le Brun at Le Cap and say that he shall report at once to the citadel, and I shall put at the bottom, my name, the name of Christophe." The heavy chest swelled perceptibly beneath the white ruffles as he spoke.

"And also," he continued, "write to Captain Pierre Nicholas." The quill suspended in Bush's hand did not tremble nor was there a perceptible flutter in the blue eyes. Calmly he awaited the

King's words, but underneath the crimson coat his heart was pounding with suppressed excitement, for suddenly had occurred to him a plan which the next few minutes might make possible, a plan which would perhaps circumvent the designs of Nicholas and give to Bush the opportunity to attempt another flight with Virginie.

"You will say," Christophe continued, "that he will remain at Le Cap and by this order is advanced to the command of Fort Picolet. Also write to General Fournier, who now commands the fort. Let him come to me at once. Bah! That man there! He is a pig. I will teach him how to follow the commands of Christophe."

In his bold flowing hand Bush wrote the three orders. Then he sanded the drying ink and carefully read what he had written. The penmanship was excellent and the flowery phrasing of the orders seemed in keeping with the distended chest and Napoleonic bearing of the King. A second time Bush read the third letter, then he pushed back his chair and with a grave bow presented the three sheets of paper to Christophe.

The King waved them aside. "Read to me what you have written."

Slowly Bush read the letter he had composed to Captain Le Brun; then the one to Captain Nicholas; and last, the order to General Fournier to report in person to the citadel. He read dis-

tinctly and with exaggerated emphasis the rounded phrases, but there was a slight difference between what was written and the words his lips uttered, for the letter dictated to Nicholas to take command of Fort Picolet was addressed to Captain Le Brun, and that letter which should have summoned Le Brun to the citadel was indited to Captain Pierre Nicholas.

"Your signature, Your Majesty." It was the crucial minute. Carefully Bush spread out the letters on the table and dipped the quill in the ink. Then he pulled out the chair that Christophe might seat himself.

From the distance the King studied the three squares of paper as though undetermined whether or not he would obey the suggestion of the young American. Then with dramatic dignity he paced across the floor and, sitting heavily in the chair, took the quill from Bush's hand.

One by one he appeared to read the letters before him. Behind the chair Bush, fascinated, watched the powerful black hand that clutched the long white feather.

"*Bon!* my young friend, that is good."

Awkwardly as a child's the short fingers traced a large "C" at the foot of the letter to Le Brun. For a second the fingers paused suspended above the paper. Then in irregular letters he traced the word "Rex" behind the "C." Once again he

inscribed the grotesque signature. Then he dipped the quill in the ink. Only the letter to Nicholas remained.

"My friend, the King writes!" he commented with dignity.

Again, and for the third time he traced the letters. It was signed. With affected leisure Bush folded the sheets and thrust them in his breast.

"They shall be sent by courier, at once, Your Majesty."

The King had once more taken his position before the fire. He nodded assent. With his cheeks flushed with the success of his coup, Bush bowed and went through the door to the courtyard.

The first act of John Bush, after leaving the apartment of Christophe, was to search out the officer in charge of the King's couriers and start on their way the three letters bearing the royal signature. Then, with a natural curiosity to which his position granted ready gratification, he began an apparently casual, but, as a matter of fact, intensive examination of the citadel.

It was noon when he sat down with a dozen of the officers of the King's bodyguard for the midday meal. In the first few hours he had completed as far as possible his first survey of the fortress. In size and in the completeness of its equipment it far exceeded even his most coloured expectations. In the endless galleries and barracks five

thousand men could be easily housed. The magazine contained casks of powder apparently sufficient to serve the guns of the fort indefinitely. In the vaulted rooms of the armoury were innumerable stands of muskets, bayonets without number, and cases piled high to the roof containing flints and spare locks and gun barrels. A system of stone cisterns fed by springs supplied water in quantity and of the greatest purity, and in the commissary were stored provisions to serve the garrison for a year at the most conservative calculation.

As yet the citadel was incomplete. In the long galleries which rose in four stories, one above another on three sides, only a small part of the great guns were in place. Slowly these were being hauled from Le Cap, huge smooth-bore pieces of bronze; guns bought by Christophe from the French; guns that had served on ships-of-the-line or with the armies of Napoleon; guns which now from their stanch carriages were to point their black muzzles down at the green valleys from which at any moment the King might expect to see the armies of Pétion fling themselves against his final refuge. Alongside the guns that were in place were piled pyramids of round shot and beneath the wooden hatches in the floor close to the trail of each gun the powder hoists dropped down to subterranean passages where the buckets could be loaded directly from the magazines.

It was late afternoon when Bush had completed his investigation of the interior of the fortress and found himself in a tower that rose the apex of the structure, high above the southern battlements. As he reached the top and first gazed about him, the magnificence of the scene broke upon him with a force that almost dazed him. On every side, from the ramparts of the citadel the world seemed to drop abruptly into a void. Like a tremendous tower crowned by the fortress, Le Bonnet Évêque rose almost perpendicular three thousand feet. To the south and west, across the dark valley far below, the mountains of San Domingo, blue-green in the slanting light, tumbled like an angry sea of torn earth, forest-clad, wild and desolate. Clouds drifted among their summits ; far as the eye could see they extended, a tremendous relief map upon which John Bush gazed down from his man-made aerie.

He turned to the north. A hundred feet below was the wide courtyard of the citadel, battlement surrounded. Beyond it the eye again dropped to the plain of Le Cap so distant that it seemed no more than a bright garden, and at its farthermost extremity was Le Morne, a perfect cone, with the white houses of the town at its eastern slope and beyond it the blue band of the sea. In the east the shoreline curved beyond the plain, until the mountains rose out of the water in the purple

distance and piled southward, one upon another crowding inland.

Slowly he walked down the successive stairways to the broad parapet on a mighty buttress that was built out from the body of the fortress overhanging the cliff upon which its foundation rested. A cool breeze blew from the sea. Swallows wheeled in the air above. Voices sweet in the distance echoed up from the courtyard. He walked down the broad flat top and peered over the edge. For three hundred feet the wall of masonry rose perpendicular, and below its base the cliff, a face of torn rock, dropped four hundred feet more to the tops of the distant palm-trees that crowded up against its base.

Dizzy from the consciousness of altitude he drew back and crouched on his heels. Here on this giddy height a year before, Christophe had displayed the subordination of his troops to three horrified officers of the French army. Bush could see them in his imagination crowding back with blanched faces behind the black King who with bared gums and slit-like eyes gave the harsh order of execution. The drums were beating. In ranks of five, fifty of the King's troops in full equipment marched down the parapet!

"Squads left." The foremost rank wheeled. Tramp, tramp, pounded their shod feet. A French officer gave a little startled cry. With left feet

lifted the front rank had disappeared over the brink. The second followed. The third, too, was gone. Four, five, six—ten ; the parapet was bare !

"*Voilà, mes amis!*" There was the smile of a beast on Christophe's lips. "My troops obey, eh?" He made no mention of the worse than death which would have followed their disobedience !

There was no limitation to sight. Miles away in the plain John Bush could see the thread of the road appearing and then disappearing among the trees. By now the courier should be clattering into Le Cap. The orders he carried were imperative. No one dared delay on the command of Christophe. As soon as horses could be saddled, Pierre Nicholas would set out for the citadel. By dawn of to-morrow he should report to the King.

What then? Bush in his imagination construed the probable sequence of events. It must be he, Bush, who would first meet Nicholas. After that? He shrugged his crimson-clad shoulders.

A soldier was approaching him along the parapet. Ten feet away he stopped and saluted. Bush rose and returned the salute.

"Monsieur, a man is held at the guardhouse who wishes to speak with you."

"Lead the way."

Who could the man be? Who was there in all the world who could desire speech with him. The guardhouse struck an ominous note. It must be

someone from the outer world. A messenger, perhaps. Instantly he thought of Virginie. Could it be from her that this stranger had come. The possibility quickened his steps.

"Ah!" It was Luke, but he dared not call him by name.

In the gloom of the small damp room by the entrance he saw the giant negro standing between puny guards. A broad smile slashed the black face with a gleam of glistening teeth.

"Release him. It is a matter that concerns the King!"

The guards retreated respectfully. At a sign the negro followed Bush into the hall outside the door.

"You have something for me?" Bush asked.

Luke fumbled in his breast. Then he slipped over his head a light cord with a small package attached to it, and with a guttural sound from his parted lips thrust it into Bush's hand.

Bush unknotted the cord and untied the package. Inside the outer wrapping was a sheet of paper closely folded, and within it was a heavy gold ring set with a grayish-green scarab. Automatically he slipped the ring over a finger of his right hand and then unfolded the paper. It contained only a few sentences, and before he read he dropped his eyes to the signature. It was signed by Samatan.

Monsieur—Bush held the paper close to his eyes to decipher the words in the dim light—*the ring which I send you will serve you if a time of great necessity comes to you. I send it by your faithful servant who is accompanied by Thomas Huggett who also desires to aid you in your endeavours. Consider not the ring slightly.*

Your obt. servant,

NAPOLEON SAMATAN.

"Huggett is with you?"

Luke shook his head violently in the negative.

"Ah! He is at Millot? Down there?" He pointed toward the distant town in the valley.

A smile of assent gave answer to the question.

"Good! Return to Millot. Do you understand? There wait with Huggett for me at the café. At any hour of day or night I may come." Bush paused; then he continued: "Yes, if possible, have horses; three horses, where you can get them instantly. Do you understand?"

Luke nodded, and Bush saw him disappear through the guardroom door. He was gone as silently and as suddenly as he had appeared. It would be a simple matter, Bush realized, for the negro to await at Millot his coming. Luke's familiarity with the country and his understanding of the language enabled him to pass without suspicion. And, furthermore, his dumbness in

this particular emergency was an additional safeguard. As for Huggett, Bush felt no concern. Doubtless the sailor had travelled with Luke to Millot in the guise of a trader. It was not unusual for an occasional white man to go inland to Christophe's mountain capital; many foreigners appeared there from time to time. Inwardly he thanked Providence for the loyalty of the two men, for their unswerving devotion which was to serve him far better than he even realized.

As to the ring and the action of Samatan in sending it to him, he was less clear in his mind. That it was an act indicative of the strongest friendship he realized keenly, but just why the merchant should send the beetle ring was not so understandable. Luke and Huggett must have received the information of his transportation to the citadel from Samatan; it was doubtless on Samatan's suggestion that they had followed him. If there was more to the plan the future would disclose it.

Again his speculation turned to the ring. He examined it on his finger. There was nothing particularly remarkable about it; an Egyptian scarab set in a plain gold band. But San Domingo was teeming with superstition. From Africa strange and terrible beliefs and practices had been brought by the slaves and handed down from generation to generation. Witchcraft was

practised. No one was immune from the taint of superstitious beliefs. Doubtless some mysterious power was attributed to the ring he now wore, and, whether or not Monsieur Samatan believed in its efficacy, he had realized that it might stand Bush in good stead in some emergency in which human powers could not avail.

There was no superstitious acceptance in the mind of John Bush, but he could not deny that the gold band on his finger gave him a sense of assurance he had not hitherto possessed.

THAT evening Bush again sat at the round table in Christophe's apartment and transcribed letters for the royal signature, but it was difficult for him to hold his thoughts on the work before him, for in his imagination he sat on the stone bench in the moonlit garden of Leroy Mangan with the fountain's jet like a silver bell sounding in his ear, or through the night he rode with Pierre Nicholas out from Le Cap along the white road that led to Millot and the citadel.

It was late when the King dismissed him. The room was hot from the constantly burning fire on the hearth, and Bush walked out into the court-yard to breathe the night air. In the south, piled high to the zenith, black clouds crowded the sky. In the north the stars still sparkled brilliantly and the purple sky was luminous with their light. A distant crash of thunder echoed among the mountains like a bombardment of artillery. Then from the clouds the lightning fell, a spurt of green fluid bathing the battlements of the citadel in its uncanny light.

Quickly the storm-clouds rode over the citadel,

shutting out the stars until only a band of unobscured light stretched along the horizon beyond Le Cap. Fat drops of rain splashed like hail on the pavement and a chillness came into the air like a damp breath from a cave. With increasing frequency the green glare of the lightning ripped open the enveloping night. Then came the rain. Torrential in its force, it pounded the pavement and through the falling water in the constant flicker of the lightning the towers stood sharply defined as though inked against a sheet of whitish paper.

In the shelter of an arched doorway Bush watched the storm pass over in all its sudden violence. With a grim smile he looked north toward Le Cap and pictured the unfortunate Nicholas seeking inadequate shelter beneath some tree by the roadside. Overhead the clouds were already breaking and a few stars shone calmly in the black rifts.

In his room the air was warm and lifeless, and without undressing he flung himself down for a few hours of troubled sleep. Against the ceiling fireflies flashed their green light like errant stars and through the open doors bats fluttered in soft-winged flight.

The room had grown cold with the waning light when Bush awoke. He shivered slightly and his hand moved to draw a blanket over him.

Then like a flash the occurrences of the day previous passed before him. It was still night, but dawn could not be far distant. And with dawn would come Pierre Nicholas. Even now Nicholas must be spurring the fresh horse that had awaited him at Millot up the twisting road to the citadel. At the earliest opportunity that morning he would report himself to Christophe and present the falsified order to explain his presence. Some time between his arrival and that interview, it was necessary that Bush should encounter him. Within that little bracket of time must occur the act which Bush had premeditated.

He slipped into the crimson coat and with his bare hands in lieu of a comb smoothed back his hair from his forehead. Groping in the darkness he found his sword where he had hung it on a chair-back, a lean straight blade of English steel, the dress sword of the King's bodyguard. His eyes were accustoming themselves to the darkness and he crossed the room to the door which led out to the courtyard. The world was bright with starlight and the huge court seemed like a white square surrounded by the impenetrable shadows of the walls. It was very still; so still that the feet of the sentries sounded loud as they tramped their beats, and from the black interior of the fortress came occasional indefinable sounds that told of the presence of sleeping men. The

dew had fallen heavily and the stone flags gleamed with moisture.

He hurried across the court and found himself in the corridor that led down by the wide stone stairs three stories to the entrance of the citadel. At the stairhead he paused and listened. From the guardroom came the muffled sound of voices. He walked a few feet down the gun gallery and peered out of a vacant port. It was light, a soft white light that preceded the dawn. A hundred feet below on the terrace in front of the entrance two horses cropped the short grass ; they were still saddled and bridled and their necks and flanks were white with froth. Sounds from below caused Bush to retrace his steps to the stairhead. There were two voices that he did not recognize, then a third voice replied. It was the voice of Pierre Nicholas.

Already Bush could hear his feet on the stairs and the clicking of his spurs. Hurriedly he stepped back through the door to the courtyard. Undoubtedly Nicholas would go immediately to the quarters of the King's bodyguard and there await for the morning to present himself to Christophe. In that case he must pass through the door where Bush was standing.

The approaching steps sounded loud on the landing. From his place Bush heard them cross the corridor. Then a man stepped out from the door-

way, and at the same instant Bush confronted him. It was Nicholas.

"*Sacré Dieu!*" Nicholas took a step backward, startled by the sudden apparition. Then he peered into Bush's face.

"It is I, John Bush."

Nicholas instinctively reached for his sword hilt. In the dim light Bush could read the amazement in his eyes.

"Stop, Pierre Nicholas, there is a matter to be settled between us. I have awaited your arrival."

"Out of my way! The King has summoned me. I shall find time for you later." There was an ugly sneer in Nicholas's voice, and as he spoke he started to pass the man who confronted him.

"Easy, monsieur." Bush was in his element, and he spoke with a gentleness that invariably characterized his most violent emotions. "It was I, Pierre Nicholas, who wrote the letter which brought you here."

"The King signed it, fool."

"But, monsieur, one forgets, perhaps, that Christophe reads but poorly and if a letter intended for General Fournier should be addressed to Nicholas, and the one for Nicholas . . ."

A torrent of abuse broke from the lips of

Nicholas. With a thrust of his arm he flung Bush back against the wall. Recoiling from the blow with an unexpected suddenness, Bush leaped to the side of his assailant. An arm in a crimson sleeve shot through the half-light and with a stinging impact the flat of the bare hand fell full across the face of Nicholas.

Half-crouching and face to face, the two men regarded each other.

"Now, monsieur, perhaps you will fight." The gentle stroking tone was gone from Bush's voice.

Let it be said to the credit of Pierre Nicholas that he was not a coward. Treacherous and lying as he might be when baser actions seemed best to serve his purposes, the crisis never found him reluctant to defend his dubious honour in the manner of the times. Like many of the better class of his countrymen, he had been educated at Paris. And that education, equally characteristic of the period, placed strong emphasis on the defence of honour by the sword. His training in that art had been thorough, and a natural aptitude had made him more than an average master of the long blade at his belt. Probably it was the confidence which proved skill had given him that made him now accept the challenge of the American.

Nicholas drew himself to his full height and

bowed slightly. "I am at your service, Monsieur Bush; at your convenience."

"There is no better time than the present," Bush answered. He glanced at the sky. It was already brilliant with the blue of day. "The parapet yonder," he suggested. "It is wide and smooth."

From within the fortification a bugle sounded. Then from another part of the citadel a second took up the call. From the summit of the battlements gray feathers of smoke were rising. From within the grimy gray walls was the sound of awakening life.

In silence they walked across the courtyard and climbed the steps which led toward the parapet.

"Your sword is one to which you are not accustomed," Nicholas remarked.

"And you are wearied with your night in the saddle."

They reached the wide level space which looked down upon the world. In the east the sun was climbing the horizon and the ocean flamed with golden light. Far below on the plain white wraiths of mist filled the lowlands. A cock was crowing in that other earth below. It was infinitely still.

Without words the two men removed their coats and rolled back the ruffled sleeves on their right arms. Nicholas drew his sword and with a faint

gesture presented the hilt to Bush. The other waved it aside.

"Keep your sword, Monsieur Nicholas. They are both equally strange to me."

How little Bush knew of swordsmanship Nicholas may have suspected, for in his varied experiences there had been few occasions when Bush had had cause to profit by the teaching of an experienced master. Yet, he possessed some slight knowledge and a natural aptitude which in a measure offset his disadvantage.

They faced each other with blades raised in salute.

With a click of steel the lowered swords crossed.

Right arms outstretched and bodies turned on widespread feet, thrust parried thrust.

The large white face of Nicholas was expressionless except that the lips were tightly set and the black eyes fixed the American with a look of confidence.

Slowly under a succession of lunges, Bush was forced back along the parapet. Then the blue eyes grew cold ; a flush tinged his cheeks. In a frenzy of thrusts he drove Nicholas back and beyond the distance he had lost.

"Ah!" The word came with a hissing breath from the thick pale lips as with a skilful feint Nicholas's sword-point pierced the white forearm of the American.

"Are you satisfied, Monsieur?" Nicholas parried leisurely as he spoke.

"No!" With a rush Bush flung himself forward. The whirling blades glittered in the sunshine. Steel clashed against steel.

But in that second, Nicholas's eyes had glanced from the strained face before him to the white right hand that grasped the sword hilt. And on the third finger of that tense hand he had seen something that caused him momentarily to retreat before the onrush. On the third finger of Bush's hand a scarab beetle was held by a ring of gold.

Bush saw a fleeting look of dismay on the white face that he did not understand. Only he recognized that for some unknown reason Nicholas was on the defensive and retreating before him.

Step by step Bush worked his way forward. Behind the retreating Nicholas the edge of the parapet, unobstructed by even a ledge, barred the way. Again Bush lunged to pierce the other's defence, and again he bore Nicholas backward.

"Hold!" The word came like a cry of terror from Bush's lips. His sword rattled on the stones. In that least step the right heel of Nicholas had caught on a protruding fragment in the pavement. His body thrown from its poise, he reeled backward. His right hand shot out behind him to break the fall, but the edge of the parapet was beneath his heels and the hand clutched wildly at the empty

air. Slowly, it seemed, he turned in the air and backward fell head-foremost from the edge, his sword still clenched in an extended arm.

A feeling of nausea brought Bush to his knees. Down in that blue gulf a black object fell, turning slowly. A black speck it had become. And now it disappeared into the roof of trees, far down below the cliff, a thousand feet below.

He glanced behind him at the courtyard. Some soldiers were already forming, probably to relieve the guard. There was no time to lose if an immediate escape was to be effected, and immediate escape was imperative. At any minute word of Nicholas's arrival at La Ferrière might be carried to the royal apartments and search would be made for him. It was not unlikely that some watchful eye had seen the two men on the parapet. That would lead to questioning. Quickly the sequence of possible events passed before him. Thrusting his sword into its scabbard, he walked hurriedly to the stairs and ran down them to the courtyard.

A sentry dozed at the entrance to the King's apartment, but his sleep-filled eyes recognized the uniform, and Bush passed through the doorway without hindrance. On the round table the papers were still heaped in disordered piles and a few were scattered about the floor where they had been blown by the storm of the night before. Bush selected at random a large document at the top of

which was printed the royal arms and the words "Le Roi" in bold, black letters. Thrusting the paper in his breast, he walked through the corridor to his bedchamber and took from the chair where he had left it the gold-encrusted hat which had been given to him with his uniform.

No one spoke to him as he crossed the courtyard, and as he descended the stairs in the half-light the two soldiers whom he passed flattened against the wall with an awkward salute and with no apparent surprise in their eyes.

In the guardroom a dozen men sprawled on wooden benches against the stone walls. A candle guttered in a wine-bottle on a table. Through a barred peep-hole in one of the massive doors the daylight poured, a palpable bar of light that intensified the darkness of the room and paled the tongue of flame at the candle-tip.

"Attention!" The men scuffled to their feet. "I come from the King. Quickly! A horse."

A sous-lieutenant, who evidently was in command, picked up the candle and thrust it in Rush's face. Then he saw the uniform and came sharply to salute.

"Quick there! Open the gate, and you"—he thrust a black finger at one of the soldiers—"horses from the stables." He turned again to Rush. "You wish how many men?"

"None."

"Alone? It is against the orders."

Bush reached in his breast and held the paper under the startled eyes of the young negro.

"Do you hesitate to carry out my orders? Do you wish to hinder the business of the King?"

At the doors the soldier who had been told to bring the horses hesitated. The sous-lieutenant turned on him with an oath.

"Did I not order a horse?" he shouted.

The man fled precipitantly. Through the door which he had left open the daylight streamed into the room disclosing walls of huge blocks of hewn stone and up in the gloom the vaulted roof streaked with the stains of moisture. Unnoticed, the candle sputtered and went out. The soldiers had again relaxed and flung themselves on the benches. In an awkward silence the two men regarded each other.

"You ride to Le Cap?" The sous-lieutenant inquired. It was a casual remark; he was not seeking information; the white face and the steady blue eyes which seemed to study him embarrassed him.

"Perhaps."

There was another period of silence, then Bush saw hanging against the wall a pair of pistols in holsters. Except for his sword, he was unarmed. With apparent unconcern, he walked across the

floor and flung the holsters, which were buckled together, across his shoulder.

"They are loaded?" he asked.

The officer nodded. Evidently he desired to protest, but fear restrained him.

With his ears strained to detect a sound, Bush waited. Had his escape been noticed, any moment might bring the noise of feet on the stairs. There could be no escape. He would be trapped. Undoubtedly the officer of the guardroom attributed his evident impatience to the urgency of the business which the document indicated. Minutes passed. Together they walked to the door and stood waiting on the threshold. Outside on the terrace the black horse that had carried Nicholas to La Ferrière so short a time before cropped the scant grass; the smooth flanks still shone with sweat, and the saddle-blanket that lay beside the saddle on the ground was dark with moisture.

There was a clatter of hoofs and around the corner at the far end of the terrace the soldier who had been sent for a horse came galloping; a moment later he swung from the saddle, the bridle in his hand.

"Good!" Bush stroked the high arched neck. "And you, monsieur"—he turned to the officer—"I do not need to warn you that the King desires there must be no announcement of the departure of his messenger."

The sous-lieutenant drew himself to a salute. "We are not free with words," he answered.

With forced slowness Bush inspected the saddle. Then he swung himself easily to the horse's back. The terrace was deserted except for the young officer and the grazing horse. He glanced up at the walls. So straight and so high were they that they seemed to incline above him, an illusion heightened by a white wisp of cloud that sailed slowly across the edge far up against the blue. The three superimposed rows of black ports were deserted; no faces peered down at him from loophole or battlement.

Once again he glanced back at the citadel. From the trees the towering prow hung almost above him. Then the road turned and he gave his attention to the winding way which led down to Millot.

The air refreshed him, and as he turned a corner a cool breeze from the sea fanned his heated face. From the citadel to the palace, he estimated, was about three hours' ride. That would be at the very best, for the horse must be saved against an unforeseen emergency or more probable pursuit. Sooner or later his escape would be noticed. The guardroom officer would be brought to Christophe and questioned. A smile played about his lips as he thought of the black face of Christophe when the news should be brought to him.

He examined the pistols which he had fastened

to his saddle. The flints were bright and clean and the priming in the pans assured him that they were loaded. He had no ball or powder, but there would be no time to reload if it were necessary to use them. At least he had two charges and his sword.

Sounds of voices became evident somewhere ahead. Instinctively he reined in the horse, then he realized that there could be no danger in that direction. Through an arch of bending green he saw the cause of the sounds. A hundred yards ahead a long file of negroes bent struggling on a pair of ropes behind which rumbled a massive bronze cannon on a temporary carriage. With half-averted face, he trotted past them and his hand rose to a reluctant acknowledgment of the salute of the ragged negro who stood at attention beside the cannon as he passed. Then he heard, behind his back, the singing flick of the long whip, and his hand itched to send a bullet into the driver of the slaves.

Twice again Bush passed ascending cannon. It was always the same, always the blank black faces and white staring eyes filled with hate and anguish ; the bent and sweating bodies ; the drivers with their lithe whips flogging the bloody backs. More than once he saw a crumpled form at the roadside, more times than he cared to count, arms and legs sprawled in the dust, the face fixed in some final

paroxysm of anguish, or relaxed in the peace of death.

For at least three hours, he estimated, he had ridden. Already the bottom of the little valley into which he had descended showed at times between the trees a few hundred feet beneath him. The heat was intense. No breath of breeze moved the heavy leaves. The dust from the horse's hoofs rose and hung lifeless in the air.

Then through a break in the trees he saw a dome against the patch of sky. It was the palace at Millot. The first stage of the escape was accomplished.

The broad street was deserted as Bush rode out from behind the palace grounds and turned his horse toward the thatched building on the roadside which he recognized must be the inn. In the tropic heat of noon open doors and windows seemed gaping to catch a breath of cooling air; ineffectual for shade the palm-trees flung their distant clumps of green against a sky of startling blue. Except for a woman's voice raised in a thin plaintive song and the metallic strokes of a hammer in a smithy behind the inn, it might have been reasonable to believe that a plague had swept the village or that on that morning the entire population of Millot had been commandeered by the King to drag his cannon to the citadel.

Bush tied his horse to a rail in front of the inn

and strode through the open door. For a second his eyes, burned by the outside glare, struggled to penetrate the comparative gloom of the long, low room. Then, as he saw more clearly, a man sprang up from a chair in a far corner, and almost before he could recognize the face or the stocky figure a hand was thrust into his own and a familiar voice was endeavouring to express in almost incoherent words the joy at his deliverance. It was Huggett.

As though realizing the surprise which this unprecedented outburst of emotion must have occasioned, the sailor as abruptly relapsed into his usual deference. He waved a blunt hand at the chair in which he had been sitting.

"It's a day and night I've set in yon chair, Cap'n," he commented.

"Luke?"

"He's here. Ye have a horse, I see, but there's three waiting in a cabin outside the town, such as they be."

"How did you know where they had taken me?" Bush sat down in a chair and Huggett perched on the edge of another beyond the table.

The mate's loquacity had evidently gushed from him in the exuberance of his welcoming words.

"Samatan. Luke fetched me to his house. Come ashore, I had, to look for ye. So Samatan

fixed me up for a trader with a box of jimcracks, the packet Luke took to ye, and gold for our purposes, and gives the sailing directions for Millot." He paused for a breath. "And here we be, Cap'n, waiting for your orders."

"Mademoiselle Virginie?"

"All's well, Cap'n, far as I've been told." He regarded Bush's uniform, a question in his eyes. Bush read the look.

"No time to explain now, Huggett. I've escaped, but by now they are well after me. I must get to Le Cap as quickly as possible. You say the horses are ready?"

Huggett held out a restraining hand. "Better eat and drink, sir, unless the food I've stowed in the saddle-bags will do ye. Ye look weary, and it's a long way we'll travel yet before we can sit down again."

But Bush was already at the door. "Come," he commanded. "There's no time now for food or talk. Lead the way to the horses!"

In a small cabin at the end of the street Luke was waiting. An expression of joy flashed over his face as Bush and Huggett entered and he flung himself on the floor and clasped Bush about the knees with his long arms, overcome by the intensity of his emotion.

Bush touched the bowed figure gently on the shoulder. "Get up, Luke. There is more yet

that you shall do for me. I thank you for what you have done. I can never forget it."

The negro stumbled to his feet and the broad black face seemed straining for words he could not utter. Then he smiled broadly with a flash of gleaming teeth, rolling his eyes upward until only the whites were visible.

Behind the cabin three stunted horses crunched lazily on a pile of cane. They were saddled and bridled, but Luke made no attempt to untie the reins from the tree to which they were tethered. With a slight touch he turned Bush again to the cabin, and, wondering what might be his desire, the two white men followed. In a corner a pot hung over a bed of embers. The negro lifted the lid and pointed to the contents. Then he selected two gourd bowls from a shelf and from a pile of rubbish in the corner drew out a square green bottle.

"Wants us to eat and drink, Captain." Huggett squatted on the floor as he spoke. "Best let him have his way, sir; it's good sense, that's wot it is."

Bush nodded and the two men ate ravenously of the stew, washed down with gulps of tafia from the bottle. Through a chink in the thatched roof a patch of sunlight fell straight down to the dirt floor.

"High noon," Huggett commented, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Couldn't

be better timed, Captain, if you're wishing to make port in the dark."

Stretched on his back on the floor, his head elevated on an arm crossed behind it, Bush watched the chameleons scurry among the thatch and the bar of sunshine flood through the torn roof. Finally he spoke.

"We'll be at Le Cap after dark, Huggett. I shall go at once to Mademoiselle Virginie. You and Luke will report to Monsieur Samatan. If there is a vessel in the harbour, we must arrange passage on board. If there is no ship"—he paused, not through indecision, but to emphasize the alternative—"then we must either get to Mole St. Nicholas, or remain in hiding at Le Cap until some ship arrives. The details will be difficult, I need not warn you of that. Nor should I, after the skill with which you have conducted matters so far." He rocked to a sitting posture and got to his feet. "Come, we must be off."

All afternoon the little cavalcade retraced the road to Le Cap. Occasional bands of soldiers, recognizing the uniform of the white man, deferentially stepped to the side to let him pass. Peasants scrambled out of their way hurriedly. Sometimes riding, but more often running beside his horse, the great negro kept pace with the riders. Once or twice they paused for a few minutes to water and rest the horses, but in the

main they proceeded steadily. By twilight the mountains already seemed far behind, an ominous barrier on the horizon. Ahead lay the level plain and the long worn road.

It had occurred to Bush that his uniform might now serve rather to identify him if the pursuers questioned the soldiers or natives whom he passed, but on second thought he realized that his identity would under any possible circumstances be impossible to conceal, and for the time being the uniform of the King's guard would serve him as a protection and a passport; at least until they should reach Le Cap.

The night was falling when Huggett, who rode slightly in the lead, checked his horse and pointed to the right where the battered columns of a massive ornamental gate had once opened to the drive to some French villa.

"Stopped there before," he explained. "There's a spring, and grass."

Bush glanced at the horses. The intense heat of the long afternoon and the pace at which they had ridden showed in lathered flanks and drooping heads. Delay was dangerous, but, he realized, a time might come a few hours later when the strength of the horses might be of vital importance. A half-hour's rest would perhaps forestall disaster. He nodded assent and Huggett turned into the drive.

Through an avenue of towering royal palms, a road now overgrown with grass and bushes, led straight for half a mile to what seemed to be the ruins of a large building. Picking their way, the horses followed the winding footpath that wound along the abandoned road. Ahead, the ruined villa stood impressive in the yellow evening light. The roof was gone and the stone walls were scorched and blackened. Over them a tangle of vines threw a green mantle from which scarlet blossoms flamed like glowing embers. In the fading light bats flitting swooped in and out through the gaunt apertures of vacant doors and windows.

In the open space before the house, where once the drive had terminated in a wide circle, the riders stopped to look about them. Now a tangle of poinsettia trees and wild coffee crowded almost to the walls. On the right the slave quarters were barely visible through the dense undergrowth, a group of wattled cabins, their thatched roofs fallen between the walls in dilapidated decay. On the left, also half-hidden by the foliage, were the walls of what must have been at one time a pretentious building, probably a sugar-mill, close at hand beneath the watchful eye of the proprietor.

They dismounted and turned the horses loose to browse on the lush grass.

Then, as Bush paused beside his horse to dis-

engage the holsters and saddle-bags, a distant sound caught his ears. It was very still. Tranquil as the luminous twilight the air hung soundless about them, so quiet that Bush sensed the stillness even before the sound which transfixed him was recorded on his senses.

Far off, yet sharp and metallic, the noise of horses' hoofs sounded staccato in the evening air.

They were standing a few yards beyond the line of the avenue which led straight to the highway. Cautiously, Bush retraced his steps to a point from which he could peer down between the lines of palms. Black on either side of the drive the trees lined the way, silhouettes inked against the yellow glow of the sunset. The drive terminated in blackness; already the shadows were crowding out the last vestiges of day.

His ears tense to locate the sound, Bush stood immobile, a hand raised cautioning his companions to silence. On past the ruined villa now thundered the racing hoofbeats. Momentarily he relaxed in relief. Then came sharply the realization that the pursuers were now between him and his necessary destination. The thought was short-lived. With an uncanny suddenness the sounds ceased. Somewhere beyond the gateposts the riders had reined their horses. Had they noticed the hoof-marks turning from the highway; or had they stopped to question some travellers along the way? The latter

probably. He recalled the almost continual flow of pedestrians to and from the city.

With a low cry of warning, Bush caught his horse's bridle and stumbling through the entwined creepers ran toward the wide high doorway of the sugar-mill. Huggett and Luke had also heard the sounds with instant appreciation of the significance.

Feeling with his foot, he crossed the threshold and the horse, hoofs clicking on the stone sill, followed. All around black walls shut out the world, but above, where once the roof had been, the sky offered a square of sapphire in which a few soft stars shone dim and distant. Through the door Huggett and Luke followed, and a minute later the horses were secured in a corner of the roofless room.

"Better take a look," Huggett suggested in a gruff whisper.

"Wait here with Luke. I will look down the drive." Before Huggett could reply, Bush had disappeared in the darkness.

It was only a few yards from the mill door to the open space at the end of the drive, but by the time Bush had reached a point from which he could look down through the avenue of palms there had occurred something that sent him stumbling back through the blackness to the two men who waited his return.

For almost indistinct in the starlight, he had

seen a movement at the avenue's end. It was indefinable, indistinct, a movement that could be only the bodies of men and horses advancing slowly between the two files of palms.

"They're coming!" His voice was barely raised above a whisper.

He felt Huggett's hand on his shoulder and the touch gave him confidence. In the darkness Luke loomed monstrous, and that, too, reassured him.

The lock of Huggett's pistol snapped sharply to cock and with an inward smile Bush knew that Luke had drawn the wicked knife, he invariably carried, from its shark's-skin sheath.

Intently they listened, nerves taut, eyes and ears straining for an indication of the enemy's approach. Somewhere among the rubble a cricket chirped shrilly, a tiny, sharp, sweet note. At the door Bush waited, his pistols grasped in either hand. Behind his back he heard Huggett's breathing, but Luke had become invisible, a grim spectre swallowed by the engulfing night.

His eyes adjusted to the darkness, Bush could now clearly see the open space before the villa. In the starlight the walls of the building stood white and startling, blotched with the shadows of the creepers that wound among the stones and in and out through cavernous windows. In front was the tangle of small trees and on the right where

the palm-trees began he could see the opening to the drive. It was there that the riders must appear.

Instinctively he drew back behind the sheltering wall. From the drive a shadowy shape appeared; others followed; four men on horseback, spectral and unreal. For a few seconds they stood motionless, apparently indecisive of their next step. Then a voice determined the reality of their presence. A man was speaking in hurried French. Bush could not hear the words.

It was not unlikely that the four officers of Christophe's bodyguard who now rested their tired horses in front of the ruined villa, undecided how to proceed, might have retraced their steps to the highway and continued toward Le Cap, had not an unforeseen incident determined their immediate action. They had ridden long and hard, for the discovery of Bush's escape and the disappearance of Pierre Nicholas had not been discovered as promptly as Bush had anticipated. In fact, the morning was well advanced before Christophe, desiring to continue his dictation to his new secretary, had made inquiry. Then in rapid succession came a bewildering mass of information. A soldier had seen two men climb the parapet and another soldier had seen Bush return alone. The officer of the guardroom, his face ashen with terror, told of the arrival of Nicholas and the solitary departure of Bush on horseback. The

lips of the King had drawn back from his pink gums with a snarl as he heard the faltering words, and his eyes grew red and small in the broad black face. Of the officers who crowded the anteroom, there were four whom he called by name. They would follow and bring back the fugitive. With a salute they acknowledged the command and in an instant were gone. The face of Christophe grew more composed ; there was even a trace of a smile on the thick red lips, for these four men whom he had dispatched could be relied upon ; blood to them was less than water, and their cruelty was a by-word even among men who had grown callous to atrocity ; they were a product of the terrible school of Dessalines. The King was thinking of what might happen should the white man offer resistance, and the smile broadened.

These were, then, they who sat in the starlight by the crumbling villa, and from the mill door the tense eyes of John Bush regarded them, uncanny, indefinable blotches merged into the dense shadows of the night.

Small are the incidents that often turn the directions of men's affairs. Even as the four riders turned to retrace their way back through the avenue of palms the mount of the rearmost horseman, sensing with delicate nostrils the presence of a kindred spirit, gave a short ringing neigh. And like an echo answering from the roofless mill came

the response from one of the tethered mares that Huggett had secured at Millot.

There was a quick movement of the horsemen, a scurrying of hoofs on the sod; the sound of bridles and spurs.

"*Les blancs!*" A voice spoke excitedly.

The horsemen were lost to view in the shadow of the trees as they charged toward the mill. Hoofs rattled on loose stones. Then a few yards distant in the darkness they halted.

"You will do well to surrender," called one of the four in French.

"And you, gentlemen, will do even better to retire before I fire." The drawl which was so often noticeable in Bush's speech was pronounced, although he replied in the same tongue.

"It is he!"

A red spurt of flame and a crashing report cut the darkness, and a bullet flattened against the stone side of the doorway a few inches from Bush's cheek. Keen eyes had detected him, but his own eyes were no less active and in the flash of the pistol he had located one of the horsemen. Almost simultaneously his own pistol answered; there was an angry cry of pain, a rustling and thrashing in the bushes, and the sound of a horse circling wildly, followed by the diminishing clatter of its hoofs as it ran off down the drive.

With a rush the three who remained charged the

doorway. There were curses and a wild thunder of hoofs, sharp urges to the horses, and then through the drifting pistol smoke Bush saw them above him in the huge doorway, broad black chests of horses, a tangle of hoofs that seemed to strike out at him, and above, leaning down over the straining necks of the horses, the red-coated bodies of the riders.

What happened in that brief interval that followed, Bush could never tell. He recalled a succession of blinding pistol-shots and the crashing bodies of maddened horses as they crowded through the door. He remembered firing his second pistol squarely into a black face that leaned down toward him and in the quick glare he had seen Luke, his long knife embedded in a red-coated breast, dragging down with his powerful arms his victim from the saddle. Then a heavy body struck him and carried him backward to the earth. Terrible hands tore at him and hot breath beat in his face. His arms strained and his fingers clutched a thick throat until the hot breath slackened. Something warm and wet flooded his face. Then the man's strength faded. With a final wrench Bush shook himself free and staggered to his feet. Above in the square of sky the stars shone brightly. He heard the horses uneasily moving in the blackness of the enclosure. Somewhere in the dark a man groaned and was still.

"Captain!" Huggett's voice, even and emotionless, broke the spell of the fearful silence with the single word.

"Here I am. Are you hurt?"

"No, sir, but there's a man apiece for us, and two for you, Captain, counting the first one you got out in the bushes."

"Where's Luke?"

There was no answer, but Bush saw the head of the negro against the sky, looking down into his face, and his hand reaching out felt the sinewy forearm. Then he heard Luke clucking in his throat. All was well!

With his flint and steel the negro caught a spark in a bit of lint torn from his ragged shirt; a few dry leaves, and then a tiny fire shone clear and yellow in the breathless air. By its light Bush saw the stone walls surrounding, and the wide black doorway. A few yards away the three riderless horses were cropping at the grass which thrust up between the stones, and on the floor, like crumpled bundles of rags, three red-coated bodies lay limp and lifeless.

"Dead for good. You fixed him, Captain." Huggett prodded a limp body with the toe of his low sailor's shoe. "Got one myself," he continued, "and Luke scotched the other one. Get your knife again, Luke?"

The negro grinned with a gleaming flash of teeth

and half-lifted the knife at his belt from its sheath. Huggett bent over one of the bodies.

"It's him that made a noise just now," he explained. "Won't hear from him again. He's gone now."

In the light of the tiny fire the scene seemed unreal and fantastic. Monstrous, the walls shut out the world, and in the square space beneath the sky the three men and the horses cast gigantic shadows on the walls. On the ground, stark and insignificant, lay the dead; they who so little time before had been a menace to the men who now regarded them.

The moon was lifting, large and yellow, from the brightened east when Bush, Huggett, and Luke rode out from the avenue of palms and turned loose their former horses at the edge of the highway. Then riding the three horses they had taken from their prisoners, they turned to the right along the broad road to Le Cap.

The moon was setting well into the west when the hoofs of their horses clattered on the stone bridge at the outskirts of the town. Not a light was visible. Wrapped in silence and darkness the city slept under the flood of moonlight. Riding abreast, they trotted slowly past the Camp de Mars where so recently beyond the prison walls Bush had waited for death at the muskets of the firing squad; past the cluster of thatched huts at the edge of the

town ; into the straight street that led along the harbour-front. With anxious eyes he scanned the harbour. The riding-lights of two vessels shone clearly. Fate at last seemed favouring ; perhaps by one of these ships escape would be made possible.

A few turns and they reined in a square away from the house of Monsieur Samatan. All had been arranged. Huggett and Luke were to report to the merchant ; alone Bush would ride to the house of Leroy Mangan, and, if possible, return to them with Virginie before dawn brightened the streets. To Samatan was to be left the decision whether they should remain concealed beneath his roof until a vessel made the harbour, or proceed immediately to the Mole St. Nicholas.

Alone on the deserted street, Bush urged his horse impatiently as he thought of his quest. At his side trotted a second horse, caught to his hand by its bridle. In silence Fort Picolet slumbered, the sentry at the gate unconcerned with the solitary horseman who rode so late. Beyond the turn he felt the cool breath of the sea. Then the horse followed the twisting road through the tunnel of overlapping trees. Loud the hoofs beat on the flooring of the bridge where so short a time before, a time that seemed so long ago, Bush had been separated, a captive, from her around whom his whole life now centred. The horses were panting

and he slowed down to a walk as they climbed the hill. Beyond the next turn was the house of Leroy Mangan. There awaited the next vital episode; he wondered what might be the outcome. Then his thoughts turned to the next step beyond. Would it be a ship now in the harbour, or must the perilous flight be continued across the northern end of the island to the Mole? That was too far ahead to speculate. Sufficient was the problem at hand. Before him stood the white stone gateposts to the entrance to the estate of Leroy Mangan.

Just inside the gate, in the shade of the mangoes, he tethered the horses. Then cautiously treading the turf at the edge of the drive he advanced stealthily to the house. There were no lights. Through the leaves of the trees that surrounded it, the moon splashed the walls with mottled whiteness. Quickly he crossed an open space to the shadow of an acacia which stood beneath her window. The thought that she might not be there suddenly seized him. It could not be; where else could she be? Softly he whistled. The blank windows above him gave no sign. Again he trilled. Surely she would not sleep deeply with the terror of all that concerned her.

Then he saw her; her face was very white in the starlight. Over each shoulder her dark hair fell in heavy braids. A long, slender hand rested on the stone sill.

"I have come for you. Can you go with me now?" He spoke very low, but she caught his words through the rich silence. A finger rose to her lips.

"I shall come quickly. Meet me at the gate."

There was no hesitation; no questioning. Implicitly she put her trust in him. Over Bush for the first time came a great awe, a tremendous sense of his responsibility. In his precarious life this young girl was about to fling herself. What would the future bring? To him alone, little mattered. But with her, all things were vital. If the escape should fail; the consequences appalled him. Mangan aroused to wrath might be capable of action inconceivable. In his great love for Virginie, John Bush was tempted again to call her to the window and then with one last lingering memory of her face escape from the island, alone, for ever. Nicholas was dead; her greatest danger was averted. His brain seemed incapable to decide. Then out of the frenzy of his thoughts came the recollection of her lingering lips, her voice again thrilled him, again he felt his arms around her yielding body. Stealthily he retraced his steps to the entrance to await her coming.

The horses munched the grass. Above the canopy of trees the sky seemed almost as bright as day. Flooding with almost palpable light, the moon pierced in and out among the shadows. He

leaned against the trunk of the mango. Then, restless, he paced back and forth in the gloom. Minutes passed. Could anything have happened? His ears seized the silence to wring from it the slightest sound that might tell of the discovery of her flight. A mile away a dog bayed mournfully.

From the house she came with a faint grating of her feet as she crossed the gravelled way, which told him of her presence before he saw her. Beneath the sheltering tree they met. He could not see her face for the long black mantle she wore completely covered her, but he felt it pressed against his own, her arms encircling his shoulders. For a long time they stood unable to break the spell that held them, then he gently disengaged her.

"We must go, beloved," he whispered. "No one could have heard you?"

"No one!"

Slowly the horses retraced the long winding road to the town. Then through back streets they followed a circuitous way until they stopped before the house of Monsieur Samatan. Already the street was pale with dawn. Hardly had they stopped before Luke stepped out from the arched doorway. Carefuly Bush lifted Virginie from her horse, and together they entered the door which swung open as they reached it. Behind them they heard Luke leading off the horses.

As the door closed, Bush found himself face to face with Monsieur Samatan. With a cry of pleasure the merchant caught his hand in both his own. Then he bowed to Virginie with sweeping grace.

"Welcome, my friends. It will always be my dearest memory that this long adventure should have ended beneath my roof."

At a round table on which were burning brightly a half-dozen candles, Huggett rose quickly from his chair and hurried to them.

"Captain"—the joy of his message almost prevented the words from forming on his lips—"a ship, sir, a Yankee ship, lies in the harbour and her captain sleeps to-night in the Hôtel de la République."

They sat down around the table and Samatan filled the glasses from a crystal decanter.

"In thanksgiving!" he said simply.

Silently they lifted their glasses.

"And now, my dear friend," Samatan continued, "you will restore to me the talisman."

From his finger Bush slipped the scarab ring and laid it on the polished table-top. There was an incredulous smile on his lips which faded as he caught the serious look in the eyes of the merchant.

"You will perhaps explain," Bush queried, "what is this ring that you have at so much trouble placed upon my finger."

Samatan smiled grimly. "Dessalines, the bloody one, wore it until a month before he died. How it came to me is a long story that must not be told. Enough to say that during his life it was his seal of death. The imprint of that strange insect authorized the death of one or hundreds, as the case might be. All men grew to fear and all men know its meaning. Had he kept it, perhaps he might live to-day."

In a flash Bush saw himself again on the parapet in the flood of morning light, the earth lying far beneath him. Again he felt the sword of Nicholas press him as he vainly tried to break through that invincible defence. Then he saw the glance of Nicholas fall on the ringed finger, saw his eyes start with terror, saw him retreat before it. Again he saw the black body falling, spinning through space, arms extended.

With awakened interest he handed the green-gray beetle to Monsieur Samatan. "So that is why he felt that death was inevitable," he said in a quiet voice.

The merchant nodded. "Monsieur Huggett has told me the story of the duel. It was the sight of the ring, monsieur, that has rid the world of your enemy. It is that ring that has preserved you. Had the need arisen, the King himself would have hesitated to harm the wearer of the death seal of Dessalines."

Bush felt the fingers of Virginie's hand tighten about his elbow. He turned and saw her eyes, dark and luminous, misty with emotion. "Monsieur Samatan"—he abruptly turned the trend of the conversation—"you have cheered us with the news of an American ship in the harbour. Her name, sir?"

The dark face of the merchant brightened with a smile. "It is good news, indeed, that I am able to tell you. She is the privateer brig *Chasseur* of Baltimore, Captain Thomas Boyle. This very afternoon we drank wine together, and in me, as a friend of all Americans, he confided that she returns from here to her home port after a most successful voyage during which many prizes have been taken."

Samatan got up from his chair and brushed back the hangings from a window that opened to the garden. The dawn filled the room with opalescent light.

"Come here," he commanded. "We are near the warehouse where my boat is waiting. Let us be off before there is discovery of mademoiselle's escape, before the unexpected can mar so glorious an adventure."

Bush put his two hands on the merchant's shoulders. There was a tremble in his voice that none of those present had ever before heard.

"Monsieur Samatan," he said, "there are

many things so deep that words can never do them justice—such is your friendship and the assistance you have given to us." He paused apparently unable to proceed. Then, "You will incur danger? Will not misfortune be the reward for your friendship to us?"

Samatan picked up the ring from the table and slipped it on his finger. "I am a good citizen," he said dryly. "I supply the King with money, and"—he stretched out a finger to one of the candles until they could plainly see the scarab gleaming dully in the light—"I wear the death ring of Dessalines."

A fine breeze was cutting the blue ocean with flecks of snowy foam; whitecaps sparkled in the brilliant sunlight. Under full sail the privateer *Chasseur* was dropping fast behind her sinuous wake the green mountains of San Domingo, her bow pointed to the unbroken horizon of the Atlantic.

On the fantail John Bush and Virginie Goutier leaned against the weather rail and watched the island sink into the crystalline distance. With an impulsive movement Bush put his arm around the slender shoulders of the girl and drew her to him.

"Virginie," he whispered, "there is nothing that you regret? You are leaving there for ever, to be for ever mine."

Her face was raised to his, and he saw that the dark eyes were wet with tears.

"John, dearest"—her voice was strong with the intensity of her emotion—"I love you!"

And again he felt her warm lips against his own.

THE END